



OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

BY

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# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Shelley's birth at the Manor of Field Place, August 4, 1792 ; his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley ; his father, mother, and sisters ; his early childhood ; Rev. Mr. Edwards of Warnham, his first tutor ; goes to school at Sion House, Brentford ; his character, temperament, and description of his personal appearance . . . . .	11

## CHAPTER II.

Shelley goes to Eton ; description of his sufferings, of his per- sonal pleasures ; his friend Dr. Lind ; the beginning of his literary life, "Poems by Victor and Cazire," "Night- mare" and "Zastrozzi" ; matriculates at Oxford 1810 ; friendship with Harriet Grove ; "St. Irvyne, or the Rosi- crucians" ; "The Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson" ; the romance "Leonora" ; friendship with Thomas Jefferson Hogg, and anecdotes connected there- with ; the "Necessity of Atheism" ; Hogg and Shelley expelled from Oxford in 1811 . . . . .	28
---	----

## CHAPTER III.

Shelley's engagement with his cousin Harriet Grove broken off by her parents ; Hogg and Shelley take lodgings in Poland Street ; Shelley banished from Field Place, and monetary supplies stopped ; Shelley's "Poetical Essay on the Exist- ing State of Things" ; makes acquaintance with Harriet Westbrook ; description of her and her family ; mone- tary difficulties ; elopement with Harriet Westbrook,	
--	--

Hogg ; Mr. and Mrs. Shelley joined by Eliza Westbrook ; they move to Keswick and make acquaintance with Southey ; burglary at Keswick ; Mr. Westbrook allows Harriet £200 a year ; Shelley writes a romance, "Hubert Cauvin" ; Shelley refuses to sign the entail ; is allowed £200 a year by his father ; he corresponds with William Godwin ; Shelley, Harriet, and Eliza move to Dublin ; he publishes his "Address to the Irish People" ; moves to North Wales, makes Miss Hitchener's acquaintance, and she goes to live with them ; "Letter to Lord Ellenborough" ; he makes acquaintance with William Godwin ; rupture with Miss Hitchener ; "Queen Mab," and short poems written ; burglary episode at Tannyrallt ; the trio return to Ireland, and then to London ; birth of Ianthe ; estrangement with Harriet commences ; acquaintance with the Boinvilles ; winter of 1813 spent in Edinburgh ; "The Refutation of Deism" ; Shelley re-marries Harriet ; Harriet leaves Shelley ; Shelley meets and falls in love with Mary Godwin ; interview with Harriet ; Shelley and Mary Godwin go to the Continent ; birth of Charles Bysshe, and account of Harriet's death . . . 52

#### CHAPTER IV.

Claire Clairmont accompanies her half-sister Mary and Shelley ; journey to Paris and Switzerland ; Shelley commences his romance "The Assassins" ; they return to England by way of the Reuss and Rhine ; Mary records the trip in her "History of a Six Weeks' Tour" ; death of Sir Bysshe Shelley ; arrangement with Sir Timothy, which gives Shelley £1,000 a year, a fifth of which is given to Harriet ; Shelley's health ; birth and death of Mary's first child ; Claire Clairmont leaves the Shelleys ; Mary and Shelley live at Richmond, Windsor Park ;

Other Poems" published; unpleasantness with William Godwin; Mary and Shelley and Claire Clairmont go to Geneva; Mary and Shelley become acquainted with Byron; Claire Clairmont's liaison with Byron; friendship of the two poets; "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" conceived; "Lines to Mont Blanc" composed; they meet "Monk" Lewis; incidents connected with composition of Mary Godwin's "Frankenstein"; Shelley and Mary return to England; they visit Peacock at Marlow; in 1817 they settle at West Marlow; death of Godwin's adopted daughter, Fanny Imlay; Shelley visits Leigh Hunt, and hears of Harriet's death; reconciliation with William Godwin; Shelley and Mary Godwin married in London on December 30, 1816 . . . . . 105

## CHAPTER V.

Mr. Westbrook gains custody of the two children; birth of Allegra; Shelley meets Keats at Leigh Hunt's house in 1817; Shelley's poetic creations; "Endymion" and "Laon and Cythna"; description and criticism of the latter poem; its publication under title of "Revolt of Islam"; Mary and Shelley's second child born 1818; "Rosalind and Helen"; "Prince Athanase"; "Ozymandias"; "To Constantia Singing"; Shelley's prose writings; "Essay on Christianity"; "A Proposal of Putting Reform to the Vote"; "An Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte"; Shelley's philanthropy at Marlow; christening of the children; Mary, Shelley, and children leave England 1818 . . . 124

## CHAPTER VI.

The Shelleys meet the Gisbornes at Leghorn; go to Bagni Lucca; Byron's conduct to Claire Clairmont and Allegra;

in 1818 Shelley goes to Rome ; "Prometheus Unbound" commenced ; the child William dies and is buried in Rome 137

## CHAPTER VII.

The Shelleys go to Leghorn ; "The Cenci" ; they winter in Florence, where the cold hurts Shelley ; "Ode to the West Wind" composed ; in the beginning of 1820 they go to Pisa for milder climate ; friendship with the Gisbornes ; onslaught in *The Quarterly Review* ; Shelley assaulted at Pisa ; "The Cloud" ; "Ode to a Skylark" written at the Gisbornes' home, Casa Ricci near Leghorn ; "Letter to Maria Gisborne" ; "The Sensitive Plant" ; 1820 a year of political ferment among the southern Latin races ; "Ode to Naples" and "Ode to Liberty" ; at San Giuliano the "Witch of Atlas" is composed ; "Œdipus Tyrannus or Swellfoot the Tyrant" ; Claire Clairmont secedes from the household ; Medwin becomes an inmate ; the inundation at San Giuliano ; residence at Pisa ; acquaintance with Francesco Pacchiani ; Prince Mavrocordatos ; friendship with the Williamses commences ; Emilia Viviani, the inspirer of "Epipsychidion" ; Shelley boats on the Pisan Canal ; the Shelleys return to San Giuliano ; "The Boat on the Serchio" ; death of Keats, and composition of ~~Don~~ "Adonais" ; piratical republication of "Queen Mab" ; Shelley meets Byron at Ravenna ; "Hellas" ; autumn of 1821 finds the Shelleys back at Pisa ; first acquaintance with Captain Trelawny ; his descriptions of Shelley at this time ; the scheme of the joint ownership of a yacht ; the Shelleys and the Williamses leave Pisa for Casa Magni near Lerici ; the schooner *Don Juan* ; apparition of Allegra and of Shelley's self ; on the 1st July, 1882, Shelley and Williams leave for Leghorn in the *Don Juan*, renamed *Ariel* ; Shelley meets Leigh Hunt ; Shelley, Williams, and Vivian return on the 8th of July ; *Ariel* capsized, and the three occupants drowned ; examination of Shelley's body

## NOTE.

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IT is unnecessary, in a note to a biography which naturally is based upon all prior records of the poet with whom it deals, to mention the authorities whose writings have been read or consulted. But a special acknowledgment of indebtedness is due to Professor Edward Dowden, whose two comprehensive volumes on Shelley form the completest and most reliable record extant, and at the same time constitute the worthiest monument wherewith the poet's memory has yet been honoured.





# LIFE OF SHELLEY.



## CHAPTER I.

THERE are certain luminaries in whose flames critics delight to singe their wings. Goethe and Heine, Shelley and Rossetti have been and will remain stars to fascinate, perplex, and overcome many a critic-moth. And of all good poets, perhaps, nay assuredly, there is none who in his genius and personality is at once so perplexing and fascinating as Shelley. He is worshipped, and he is not less ardently abhorred ; he is upheld as a demi-god, and abjured as a sweet-voiced demon ; his teachings are preached with fervour from the house-tops, and are denounced with equal vehemence from neighbouring summits. One admirer gives us a picture of the poet which is so affecting as to make it seem sacrilege to look with critical eyes upon aught which the latter did or said ; another gives us a Real Shelley, the caricature of an apparition. There are among us many who look upon all admirers of the poet as the only true children of redemption ; there are others who regard the author of "The Revolt of Islam" as one of the most

ful lyrics, but they do not expect to find the author thereof either an incarnation of the principle of evil, or a new Son of God. The people are so much wiser than those who would instruct them. "We know the 'Sky-lark,' the 'Cloud,' the 'Sensitive Plant' by heart, and we admire and revere the beauty and noble thought enshrined in 'Prometheus Unbound' and 'Alastor,' and what we want to know about the author are those facts which are beyond dispute. As for the colouring of the latter, we can do that for ourselves." This is what the popular sentiment amounts to in the instance of Shelley. So much has been written about him that his real personality threatens to vanish completely from the view of the present and of coming generations. What also is feared by some, at least, who have the fame of the poet deeply at heart, is that the rare bloom of his genius will altogether disappear in the mists of conjecture and dispute which now prevail; the poet will fade, and the socialist-philosopher will arise; the singer will become the political or sectarian stalking-horse. Instead of "Adonais," and an unparalleled lyric voice, there will be the Vegetarian and Irish pamphlets and much wearisome bluster and counter-fury.

Only sixty-five years have elapsed since, with all its extraordinary power and promise, a brilliant life ceased suddenly amid a brief turmoil of wind and sea. Yet already is there a Shelley myth, which, perhaps, even the efforts of the most intelligent students have

and conjectural statements that we should have had little real knowledge of him. Notwithstanding (perhaps because of) all that has been written concerning Shelley, it is difficult to encounter unanimity of opinion; where-soever two or three are gathered together, there of a surety is the poet alternately black and white. There is no more noteworthy evidence of the extraordinary place Shelley holds in men's minds than this endless ebb and flow of opinion concerning him, this confused admiration and distraught hatred, this instinctive love, and this persuasive antagonism.

The moment we seek to identify a poet with his poetry we are in danger of illusion. A man is not the less a man because he sings more subtly sweet than a syren. There is a distinction between a Voice and a Soul. A nightingale's twilight plaint in the beechwood is not the less wonderful if we learn that a happy family of glow-worms has known ruin in order to sustain the musician in his high conceit of song. What then can it really matter to those of a later generation if this poet occasionally imbibed more than was good for him, if that poet infringed a majority of the commandments? Marlowe's "mighty line" has not the less sonorous music because he was addicted to loose company, and died in a tavern brawl.

It seems advisable to preface any new life of Shelley with some such remarks as these, for so prevalent is the tendency to condemn or admire the man in exact

with an undue bias in one or other direction. The present writer yields to none in his reverence for the finest work of Shelley the poet, while Shelley the man has ever attracted his affectionate sympathy and admiration. At the same time, he neither feels called upon to admire all that Shelley wrote and did, nor to omit recognition of the fact that the poet and the man acted often antagonistically to each other, as if, indeed, each were a distinct identity, united by no other bond than a literary partnership.

It is my main endeavour in this short life of Shelley to avoid all misstatement and exaggeration; to give as real a narrative of his life, from the most reliable sources, as lies within my power; to recount without detailed criticism and as simply and concisely as practicable, the record of his poetic achievements. To this end I shall chiefly rely on anecdote and explanatory detail, on poems and passages noteworthy for their autobiographical or idiosyncratic value, and on indisputable facts. I have no ambition to do otherwise than follow in the footsteps of prior biographers of the poet; in a book of such limited dimensions as this it would be unreasonable to expect more than a condensation of all really important material. Indeed, since the recent publication of Professor Dowden's memorable work, there is no possibility of room for another biography on a more ample scale. The present monograph is little more than a precipitate of that and other invaluable works which have preceded it.

with vague prognostications, fears, and hopes, and all Europe vibrated with the electric breath of revolution which emanated from the human volcano of Paris. Even in England, guarded by the sea from the immediate influx of a more ungovernable tide than that of Ocean, men spoke with bated breath of what had happened and what was yet on the forefront of the time. Those who trace in mortal lives the conjunction of starry influences will find food for suggestion in the fact that Shelley, the poet of rebellion, was born at a moment when all the stars of tumult and revolt fought in their courses against the established order of things spiritual and temporal.

At the manor of Field Place, near Horsham, in Sussex, Percy Bysshe Shelley was born on Saturday, the 4th of August, in the year 1792. Those curious in such matters can see the bedroom in which he first saw the light of what he was to find so troublous a world. Over the fireplace there is an engraved plate bearing the inscription of his name in full, his date of birth, and the following appropriate and eloquent lines by Mr. Richard Garnett—

“ Shrine of the dawning speech and thought  
Of Shelley, sacred be  
To all who bow where Time has brought  
Gifts to Eternity.”

A few weeks later, on the 7th of September, the eldest child of Timothy and Elizabeth Shelley was christened with the two names now so familiar to all lovers of

Shelleys of previous generations, while Bysshe was the name of the boy's grandfather. A detailed account of the Shelley ancestry would be out of place here. In the genesis of genius what is interesting is the immediate ancestry—the four or five preceding generations—of the poet or writer under consideration. Beyond the fifth generation there are almost certain to be links missing in the chain of transmitted faculties and tendencies: generally, indeed, there is no possibility of discovering the dominant or modifying qualities gained from the maternal side—in itself a cause quite sufficient to render the tracing of hereditary characteristics the merest speculation. If the lineal descent of a great poet could be traced paternally and maternally for several centuries, no doubt the result would be of great psychological interest and value; but as it is against all the laws of nature that the blood of the male stock can remain invariably dominant through successive generations, the value of ordinary genealogical disquisitions must be considerably discounted. What is worthy of note is that, as Professor Powden has remarked, these elder Shelleys were "conspicuous by their devotion to falling or desperate causes"; an assertion which immediately becomes significant when we remember how strenuous the poet ever was in his defiance of tyranny, and in his adherence to popular sides of national questions.

Bysshe Shelley, the grandfather of the poet, was noted for his comely face and figure, his fascinating demeanour.

pretty heiress, a Miss Mary Catherine Michell, daughter of a clergyman. The union which succeeded their elopement (for Miss Michell was only eighteen, and her friends were antagonistic to the marriage—hence Bysshe's having taken the decision into his own hands) lasted eight years; three children were the result of it, of whom one was a boy. This son was christened Timothy, and, in due time, became the father of the poet. After the death of his wife, and when close upon his fortieth year, Bysshe Shelley cavalierly wooed and (perhaps even to his own surprise) won the affections of an heiress of noble lineage, with whom he lived in marriage till he reached his fiftieth year: of this union were born seven children. With the money brought to him by marriage, and by his succession in 1790 to the Fen Place and Field Place properties, Bysshe Shelley was fairly to be considered a wealthy man. In 1806 he began to build, at great expense, that Castle Goring which he never finished; and contemporaneously he received the honour of a baronetcy, on account of electioneering and other political services. With his new dignities, however, Sir Bysshe Shelley of Castle Goring did not the more surround himself with the amenities of life. Although to the last a gentleman of refinement both in appearance and manner, his avariciousness increased yearly, and he was wont to spend much of his time in Horsham taverns, there not drinking, but arguing with domineering emphasis. For a while he lived in a small house in most undignified



periences. The boy had a certain measure of awe for his grandfather, though that his respect for him could only have been superficial is evident from the fact that he was wont to overhear—and on occasion to startle or shock strangers by imitating—the old man's unseemly vehemence of speech.

Sir Bysshe's son Timothy married, in 1791, Elizabeth Pilfold, a woman, by all accounts, of rare beauty; and, so far as can be ascertained amid many prejudiced narratives, of well-balanced mind and temper. After the birth of Percy there succeeded five children; four girls, named respectively Elizabeth, Mary, Hellen, and Margaret; and a boy, christened John. It was natural that of such a union the offspring should be pleasant of aspect, but the eldest child was something more than merely comely. Of exceptionally fair complexion, the beauty of his face lay mainly in the sensitive mouth and the large blue eyes; long locks of dull-gold hair curled to his neck; and he seems to have had that peculiar poise of the head which partly is due to refinement of race, and is partly, it would seem, a characteristic of very sensitive natures. Though in youth and manhood the features were somewhat irregular, the expression which animated them became of such rare sweetness and refinement that a famous painter declared it was simply impossible to paint the poet's

resulted in the invention of weird tales of legendary creatures, tales sometimes based on remote fact; in attempted delusion of neighbours; and in the experience of more or less positive hallucinations. We owe much of our scanty knowledge of this period of the poet's life to the fragmentary information in the letters of his sister Ellen; information, however, the value of which has occasionally to be somewhat discounted as not being directly reminiscent. It is clear that he was invariably a kind and gentle brother, displaying a consideration for his younger sisters which contrasts favourably with the conduct of most lads during the early years of the schoolboy stage. Great days were these for the little girls at Field Place when Bysshe was at home for the holidays; he would walk about with them, and tell them many wonderful things; he would take one of them on his knees, and thrill the soul of his listener with awful tales of wizards, hobgoblins, and secret passages. The "Great Tortoise" was long a theme of endless fascination. This strange creature, unseen of any, abode in Warnham Pond; many a romance concerning it was told by the inventive Bysshe, and if a bull roared in some distant meadow, if a tree fell in the woodland, if midsummer thunder rumbled mysteriously in skiey spaces, the sounds were always accounted to the "Great Tortoise." In later years the "Great Old Snake" usurped its predecessor's place—an interesting circumstance to close students of

the scythe of a gardener. The boy was generally beloved, though from his early childhood he seems to have puzzled his worthy father, a choleric, narrow-minded, but excellent-hearted squire, who has been absurdly abused because he had the misfortune to hold radically different views from those of his son, and because that son went contrary to his desires in many things. It is suggestive that most of Bysshe's in-door tales, narrated in the grim hours of shadow, were grotesque or terrifying; and hardly less so (to them) were the games in which he induced Elizabeth, Mary, or Hellen to take part. The children would be robbers, led by a daring chief; discoverers in some terrible land where awful revelations lurked in store for them; they would even personate spirits or fiends, the illusion being intensified by the blue flame which Bysshe would light and carry about in a small fire-stove. Even as a very young boy he took the keenest interest in chemical and electrical experiments; and while—as his sister Hellen has recorded—his sisters would sometimes tremble with apprehension when he called upon them to assist him, he never persisted in any experiment if he saw that he was causing pain or real fear. There was nothing of the cold-blooded experimentalist in Shelley at any time of his life, and it was in all sincerity that, in the beautiful opening of "*Alastor*," he wrote—

"If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast

memory was remarkable. Hellen Shelley records, on the authority of her and Bysshe's mother, that, when a small child, Gray's lines on the Cat and the Goldfish were repeated by him word for word after a single reading. Shelley's earliest regular instruction commenced when he was six years old. 'Till his tenth year he remained under the educational guidance of the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of Warnham; though these four intervening years were mainly spent in gaining bodily vigour. It is a common mistake to suppose that the poet was an ethereal being from his infancy onward; at no period (as his most discerning admirers will emphatically agree in insisting) was he too far removed from common humanity to be other than a genuine creature of flesh and blood. At a time when the author of the "Prometheus Unbound" and "The Cenci" was intensely mentally occupied with dreams of splendid poetic achievement, we find him following with vivid interest and practical good sense the public affairs which were then perturbing the whole nation, and even writing to a friend to be cautious about investments in home funds at a season of such universal disturbance and political uncertainty. Shelley seems to have naturally been of a vigorous constitution, though he had always more or less of that appearance of delicacy which is so far from rare among emotional and imaginative young folk of either sex. That he suffered con-

shadow of the spiritual and intellectual light in which he habitually lived.

Every student of Shelley's poetry must recollect his love of making fragile craft out of paper or iris-flags, and setting them a-sail on stream or pond. How early this sport, for a sport of irresistible fascination it always was with him, was habitually indulged in is uncertain ; but the poet certainly had himself as a very young child in view when, in "Rosalind and Helen," he wrote—

" He was a gentle boy,  
And in all gentle sports took joy ;  
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,  
With a small feather for a sail,  
His fancy on that spring would float,  
If some invisible breeze would stir  
Its marble calm : "

When Bysshe—the name invariably used by his home circle, probably out of deference to "Uncle Bysshe"—was ten years old he was promoted from Mr. Edwards' care to that of a Dr. Greenlaw, who presided over some three score youngsters at Sion House, Brentford. Although with the commencement of his second decade Shelley began to experience the inequalities and petty bitternesses of life, the time spent at Sion House was by no means a wretched one, though the boy certainly was not happy. One of his biographers, who

life. Young as he was, that mental fever, that splendid intellectual delirium as it might more adequately be termed when referred to in connection with his maturer years, which is the common heritage of genius, had filled him with the spirit of unrest, dissatisfaction, and inquiry. For one thing, the mental stimulus too strongly dominated the physical energies for him to care much for the ordinary sports of boyhood, sports habitually indulged in by his companions whether in the mood for them or not, and taken almost equally as matters of routine as the less congenial lessons. Again, Sion House Academy was frequented by the sons of tradesmen, between whom and Shelley there was the shadow of a mutual, if never very clearly defined or very militant antagonism—a half-suspicious, half-jealous resentment on the one hand, and on the other a quick scorn for certain trilling, though none the less real, vulgarities. While Shelley was still a youth he lost all perception of class distinctions, and gladly took for granted the essential equality of all men who could meet on common intellectual ground. But that even genius cannot always free itself of conventional bonds is evident from the fact that Keats undoubtedly resented Shelley's superior birth, when circumstances brought them together, and never felt quite at his ease with one whom he was ever prone to suspect of condescen-

ated Keats' sympathies more than any real or fancied implication of social superiority on Shelley's part.

The latter's almost feminine beauty, his look of natural gentleness and innocence, tempted the boys of Sion House to affront and torment one whom they at first considered a milksop. The poor lad, well-bred, sensitive, already a dreamer of dreams, an alien among his fellows, experienced many unhappy hours during his stay at Dr. Greenlaw's academy. The majority of the boys considered him as fair prey : fagging was then an institution in full force, and all the petty tyrannies which that evil system permits were exercised upon the unfortunate youngster.

Shelley's faculty for the acquirement of knowledge, more especially knowledge of foreign languages, was quite exceptional. He was in this way all the more a cause of astonishment to his comrades from the fact that he never seemed to study, but to pass most of his time in reverie and watching the clouds, in scribbling sketches of cedars and other trees, and in "mooning." Books, especially fiction, and more particularly Mrs. Radcliffe's and other weird and sombre tales of the supernatural and the horrible, were his chief delight. This morbid literature sowed seeds in Shelley's mind which at first resulted in a sterile and valueless harvest, but which later on became fruitful indeed. Every spare moment he could secure for himself was spent in solitary reading or musing.

his early days at Brendon, and I feel that a great effect upon his character, emphasizing what was noble in his nature, and developing certain traits which, without being either good or evil in themselves, were later in his life to cause both him and his friends real distress. He was not, however, invariably unhappy. His delight in the humblest aspects of nature, his romances and favourite books, his day-dreams, brought him much relief and pleasure; and it was with real joy he received letters from home, especially from the little sisters whom he so loved. Still, the memory of those early days was always for him full of painful reminiscence. A touching record of his boyish sufferings is to be found in the dedicatory prelude to "Laon and Cythna" (more widely known as "The Revolt of Islam"), written years later when the poet was smarting under cruel suffering inflicted upon him by Governmental interference with his rights as a father. Lady Shelley and one or two other biographers have supposed that the famous stanzas in question were written by Shelley reminiscently of his life at Eton, but it seems almost certain that they have reference to his first bitter experiences at Sion House.

"Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first  
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.  
I do remember well the hour which burst  
My spirit's sleep: a fresh May dawn it was,  
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,



emphasis on political and social rights and wrongs alienated Keats' sympathies more than any real or fancied implication of social superiority on Shelley's part.

The latter's almost feminine beauty, his look of natural gentleness and innocence, tempted the boys of Sion House to affront and torment one whom they at first considered a milksop. The poor lad, well-bred, sensitive, already a dreamer of dreams, an alien among his fellows, experienced many unhappy hours during his stay at Dr. Greenlaw's academy. The majority of the boys considered him as fair prey : fagging was then an institution in full force, and all the petty tyrannies which that evil system permits were exercised upon the unfortunate youngster.

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I do remember well the hour which burst  
My spirit's sleep : a fresh May dawn it was,  
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,  
And wept, I knew not why ; until there rose

And then I clasped my hands and looked around  
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,  
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground :  
So, without shame, I spake : " I will be wise,  
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power ; for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize  
Without reproach or check." I then controlled  
My tears ; my heart grew calm ; and I was meek and bold.

And from that hour did I, with earnest thought,  
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore ;  
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught  
I cared to learn ; but from that secret store  
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before  
It might walk forth, to war among mankind.  
Thus, power and hope were strengthened more and more  
Within me, till there came upon my mind  
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined."

In the main the self-account given in these stanzas is genuine, though as Shelley was so apt a pupil he can hardly be said to 'have learnt nothing from what his " tyrants knew or taught " : probably what he meant to convey was that his most vital mental development was due more to the indirect knowledge which he voluntarily acquired.

The narrative of Shelley's early boyhood may be closed with Medwin's description of his cousin's personal appearance at this time. " He was tall for his age," says Medwin, " slightly and delicately built, and

tenance was one of exceeding sweetness and innocence. His blue eyes were very large and prominent. They were at times, when he was abstracted, as he often was in contemplation, dull, and as it were, insensible to external objects; at others they flashed with the fire of intelligence. His voice was soft and low, but broken in its tones, when anything much interested him, harsh and unmodulated; and this peculiarity he never lost. He was naturally calm, but when he heard of or read of some flagrant act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, then indeed the sharpest marks of horror and indignation were visible in his countenance."

## CHAPTER II.

AT the age of twelve<sup>1</sup> Shelley was removed from Sion House to more aristocratic Eton ; possibly a course resolved upon by his parents from the first, but not improbably, at least, confirmed by the desire of Sir Bysshe, who, having been honoured by his baronetcy in his seventy-fifth year, was naturally anxious that the future head of the house which it was his intention to establish should have every educational and social advantage. The change was not one that at once brought happier days to the thoughtful; imaginative, overwrought boy, who had passed so many bitter hours since he had first left Field Place. Instead of some three-score lads he found himself in a company of several hundred, and amidst a system of petty tyranny which was prone to extend to a most evil excess.

Having been well grounded, Shelley was placed at once in the upper fourth form, and as a student he seems to have made very satisfactory progress. He first

<sup>1</sup> This point has been set at rest by Professor Dowden, who adduces evidence to prove that on July 29, 1804, Percy Bysshe Shelley's name was entered in his own writing in the head-master's entrance book.

apparently found that gentleman kindly and sympathetic; but ere long he was transferred to the house of a Mr. Bethell, a pompous and oppressively dull assistant-master. This tutor was the butt of the whole school, and apparently deserved the ridicule which was freely bestowed upon him. It was this same Bethell who was an involuntary actor in an often-described scene in Shelley's room. Entering the latter one day he found the boy occupied in the production of a blue flame, and on angrily inquiring what was taking place, was jocularly answered that his pupil was raising the devil. A volcanic battery was on the table, but the master was unaware of its properties; seizing hold of it he was suddenly hurled back against the wall by the unexpected force of the electric shock. A severe thrashing was the penalty for this misdemeanour, but probably Shelley felt that the suffering inflicted by the head-master's rod was fully discounted by the reputation he gained among his admiring fellows. This head-master was a Dr. Keate, distinguished among his compeers for pugnacity, vigour, and self-assertion, and among Etonians for his brutality. The latter has been called justifiable severity, but a man who can leave his guests in order to flog a batch of youngsters, and return with intensified gaiety and appetite, or who can gleefully thrash eighty delinquents successively, can hardly claim to be considered as nothing more than severe. Shelley received many floggings, besides the innumerable fag-thrashings

which "made his eyes flash like a tiger's, his cheeks grow pale as death, his limbs quiver." By the time he had reached the upper-fifth form, however, he had not only won a few devoted friends, but had made himself feared and respected. His fury when roused to extremes of anger and indignation, his reckless denunciations of those in authority, his wild language, his love of reading and solitude, his experimental antics, and his often eccentric demeanour, earned him the name of "Mad Shelley." Even then, however, his great moral courage and nobility of instinct impressed themselves upon some of his comrades.

Shelley's happiest hours during his residence at Eton were those in the late afternoon of each day and at night. In the afternoons, he would roam the beautiful country around with a sympathetic friend, or seek a remote spot where he could uninterruptedly pore over some thrilling romance or mystic dissertation (for poetry does not appear to have really enthralled his mind until the last year or so of his schoolboy life) ; in the evenings, he would indulge in his forbidden chemical pursuits, now sending off fire-balloons, now playing at spirit-raising by means of mystically compounded flames—or in reading some scarce tome of wondrous lore which he could not well have smuggled out-of-doors. The pleasant hours spent in the summer afternoons were remembered in later years, when

in the complete version of his "Boat on the Serchio" (Buxton Forman's edition, vol. iv.), there is a pleasant autobiographical reminiscence :

"Those bottles of warm tea—  
Give me some straw—must be stowed tenderly ;  
Such as we used, in summer after six,  
To cram in great coat pockets, and to mix  
Hard eggs and radishes and rolls at Eton,  
And, couched on stolen hay in those green harbours  
Farmers call gaps, and we schoolboys call arbours,  
Would feast till eight."

Often at Eton, and when home at Field Place, Shelley would steal out into the night ; and especially when the moon was full the temptation to these nocturnal ramblings was almost irresistible. Moonlight always had a supreme fascination for the poet. Its transforming power, its faculty for rendering weird and mournful that which ordinarily is commonplace, and its association in his mind with the revelations of the spirit-world, caused "the perilous moonshine" to exercise a powerful influence over him. In his eagerness to encounter the supernatural he would frequent haunted spots, graveyards, and any place or locality which held out any promise of satisfaction to his longing ; nor is there any reason to suppose that if a spirit had answered his summons the lad would have been grossly terrified. This would be communication with what lies beyond mortal



in prose and verse. In his beautiful "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" he refers, while describing how the first conception of intellectual beauty suddenly came upon him, to these nocturnal experiences.

"While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped  
Through many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,  
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing  
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.  
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,  
I was not heard, I saw them not—  
When, musing deeply on the lot  
Of life, at that sweet time when minds are wooing  
All vital things that wake to bring  
News of birds and blossoming—  
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me ;  
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy."

Of all the friends of his own or of much older age, whom Shelley won during his stay at Eton, none was more valued or exercised a more important influence than an elderly physician named Dr. Lind, between whom and Shelley the first link was the common love of chemical experiments and philosophical disquisitions. The friendship between the old man and the fervent schoolboy was one peculiarly touching. Dr. Lind seems to have been a man of benevolence of temper and nobility of mind ; in his youth he had been a great traveller, was always an ardent student of life and knowledge, and had exceptional personal charm. Shelley loved and revered him, and gained constant comfort

This fine friendship between the boy of sixteen and the grey-haired old doctor has been commemorated by the poet in two of his poems. In "Laon and Cythna" ("The Revolt of Islam") the physician is introduced as the old hermit who liberates Laon from prison, and thereafter ministers to his needs—

"That hoary man had spent his livelong age  
In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp  
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page  
When they are gone into the senseless damp  
Of graves. His spirit thus became a lamp  
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed.  
Through peopled haunts, the city and the camp,  
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,  
And all the ways of man among mankind he read."

Dr. Lind, again, is Zonoras in "Prince Athanase": the following extract therefrom is doubly interesting, as the record of this friendship, and for its autobiographical hint as to Shelley's remarkably rapid intellectual development—

"Prince Athanase had one beloved friend,  
An old, old man with hair of silver white,  
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend

With his wise words; and eyes whose arrowy light

Shone truth upon Zonoras ; and he lived  
From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,

The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,  
With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore  
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild.

And sweet and subtle talk they evermore,  
The pupil and master, shared ; until,  
Sharing the undiminishable store,

The youth, as shadows on a grassy hill  
Outrun the winds that chase then, soon outran  
His teacher, and did teach with native skill

Strange truths and new to that experienced man ;  
Still they were friends, as few have ever been  
Who mark the extremes of life's discordant span.

Shelley's literary life may fairly be said to have at least budded at Eton. It was before his departure therefrom that he began, in tentative fragments, the poem of "Queen Mab," though its composition, as we now know it, must be set down to the writer of 1812-13 ; that he wrote some of the short poems afterwards published in the long-sought, but not yet discovered, volume, "Poems by Victor and Cazire," and also (according to Medwin) a portion of a poem on the subject of the Wandering Jew ; that, in collaboration with Medwin, he wrote a romance entitled "Nightmare," and that he finished his much-discussed boyish effort in fiction, "Zastrozzi."

The year commencing with the early summer of 1809

most probably his full expression of his views, his  
sistent studies in branches of knowledge taboo  
school, and his defiant attitude against what he cons  
oppression—together with a natural, but none the  
unpleasing, arrogance—invited the ill-will of Mr.  
and others in authority. When he left, it was w  
goodwill of his comrades, and he seems to have re  
quite an exceptional number of parting presents  
friends and admirers. What is still more signifi  
the fact that he was frequently visited in Oxford by  
who had been attracted to him during the turbulent  
of his schoolboy life. Before passing to the acco  
the new and vivid life beginning for Shelley wi  
autumn of 1809, I am tempted to quote a passag  
Professor Dowden's record. Shelley was an apt s  
and undoubtedly gained a great amount of cla  
and miscellaneous knowledge while at Eton; but  
Mr. Dowden says, he may have learned more inde  
than through the official channels of information.  
haps his most important studies at Eton," says  
Dowden, "were those of his own choice, and  
compulsion. The grandeur of the verse of Lu  
and his daring conceptions held him as with a  
spell. Among writers in English, Franklin delight  
with his announcement of the victories of min  
matter; already he felt the strong compulsion of G  
doctrines in the "Political Justice." With Con

especially impressed by the chapter *De Deo*, in which the Roman philosopher censures superstitious myths of the loves and wars of anthropomorphic deities."

After his matriculation at Oxford in April, 1810, Shelley returned to Eton for a short time, and on July 30th, made his school-speech, the subject being the declamation of Cicero against Catiline. It was probably before his final departure that he entertained a number of his friends at a sumptuous banquet, nominally with the proceeds of "*Zastrozzi*," which was published about the beginning of June. That the young author received £40 for his romance is almost inconceivable; that he fully expected to receive at least that amount is a different matter. Probably Medwin confused the information he had obtained; in any case, it is much more likely that the supper was paid for out of funds supplied by Sir Bysshe Shelley, than out of any honorarium forwarded by the publishers of "*Zastrozzi*."

Before this event Shelley's liking for a girl-cousin, Harriet Grove, had ripened into real sympathy and affection. Miss Grove was exceedingly pretty, was of an ardent temperament, and flirted with orthodox religious and social opinions in a way that wholly charmed her unconventional cousin. According to Medwin, she wrote some chapters of "*Zastrozzi*"—an assertion that has been derided by some writers, admitted by others, and allowed to pass without emphatic comment by Professor Dowden. It seems to me more probable, con-

character and incident, and hints as to the development of the plot.

When Bysshe took up residence in Oxford he continued to correspond at great length with Harriet, and gradually the young girl and her friends became more and more alarmed at the advanced and often extravagant opinions expressed in the young undergraduate's epistles. There was at this time no definite engagement, but the elder Groves and Shelleys, as well as the young people themselves, looked upon an ultimate union as a foregone conclusion. Shelley undoubtedly loved his beautiful cousin in all sincerity, not merely as some have supposed, regarding her with the platonic affection born of sympathy, community of tastes and mutual admiration.

Shelley's love of nature, always keen, became intensified during the season he spent at Field Place before he came to Oxford. Long walks in the early morning, rambling at night, and solitary musings in lonely places at once soothed and stimulated his imagination. During the Christmas holidays of 1809 and throughout 1810 he was busy writing prose and verse with one or more co-laborers. "Zastrozzi," as we have seen, was finished at Eton; "The Nightmare" never saw the light of day; in the autumn of 1810 was published "Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire," and in December of the same year his second romance, "St. Irvyne; or, The Crucian" left the printer's hands, while the window

self an author of more or less repute. In introducing him to the intending partner of a bookseller and printer, well-known in Oxford, Mr. Timothy Shelley added that his son had a literary turn, and graciously invited his acquaintance to indulge Bysshe in his printing freaks "Zastrozzi" had readers, no doubt, though it is not easy to imagine any one being vitally interested in this story of the romantic adventures of a desperate outlaw and in his high-flown sentiments. It is unjust, however, from the comparative point of view, to speak of it as a ridiculous failure. It was written in imitation of the "Monk" Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe style of authorship, and appealed to the crude, mawkish, and sentimental taste in the literature of fiction then prevalent; and that it did successfully appeal to numerous readers is evident from the fact that many years after its appearance it came to be included in the once popular series known as the "Romancists' and Novelists' Library," where it figures as No. 10. Any reader of this monograph will find no difficulty in becoming acquainted with Shelley's prose works, which a few years ago were issued in a handy volume. So it will be enough to add here that "Zastrozzi" is a puerile and morbid story, sufficiently excellent in its degree to deserve to rank just below Lewis' and Mrs. Radcliffe's romances in point of interest and truth to life, and interesting to the student of Shelley only because of its authorship.

The young novelist-poet entered University College as a Leicester scholar. "University" was fixed upon by

once more interesting and valuable than any other, and one of the most vivid biographical sketches in our literature—Bysshe during his first term was more occupied with chemical and scientific pursuits than with literature yet it is clear from what we know of his productions at this time that he dabbled considerably both in prose and verse.

Few visitors to Oxford, with any interest in literature fail to see the rooms in "University" which Shelley occupied, rooms on the first floor in the corner next the hall of the principal quadrangle. Of all universities in the world Oxford was about the least attractive for a young man like Shelley. His training, his bent of mind, his rapidly maturing revolutionary ideas, along with his inherent repugnance to what was clothed with the veneration of antiquity and even of romance, wrought against his perception of what was lovely and of good report in the ancient city and its still more ancient institutions; he was conscious only of its intellectual stagnation, its spiritual torpor, its bondage to the most wearisome conventionalities.

Before Shelley left Field Place to take up residence in Oxford, he went to London and introduced himself to Mr. Stockdale, the publisher. The object of his visit was to arrange for the publication of a small volume of poems by himself and a friend, "Poems by Victor and Cazire." No copy of this production is known to be extant; if ever one is discovered it will almost certainly be found to be devoid of any poetic merit. Later



"The Wandering Jew," a production in the composition of which Medwin claimed a large share. In any case, however, it is of little or no poetic value.

Soon after the freshman had settled down to the routine of college life, he sent to Stockdale the manuscript of his second romance, "St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian." By a letter from University College, of the 19th of November, we learn that Shelley had overestimated the length of "St. Irvyne"; that the romance was evidently inspired by Godwin's "St. Leon"; and that its issue was imminent. From a previous letter we learn that he accepted the responsibility of its publication; and in one of December 18th, he asks that copies may be sent to one or two friends. It was put forth anonymously—"By a Gentleman of the University of Oxford." "St. Irvyne" is in some ways an improvement upon "Zastrozzi," but it is equally morbid, unreal, grotesque, and inflated. Students will find it in the same series as its predecessor, as No. 60.

Before "St. Irvyne" solaced or astonished its not very numerous readers, Shelley indulged in a printing escapade at Oxford. He had written a number of verses, most of them mere rhodomontade, but had not the critical faculty to realize their worthlessness. He showed them to his friend Hogg, who first condemned them and then suggested their being altered here and there so that they should read as burlesques. A Mr. Munday (whose partner, Mr. Slatter, was the gentleman to whom Mr.

decided upon—"The Posthumous Fragments of Mr. Margaret Nicholson, Edited by John Fitzvictor." The lady whose "posthumous fragments" were thus honoured was one Peg Nicholson, a maniac washerwoman who some few years before Shelley was born, had attempted the assassination of King George III. The secret of the real authorship was well kept, but even if it had been discovered by the Oxford authorities it is improbable that Shelley would have incurred anything further than a reprimand and a warning. The booklet seems to have had a fairly good sale among the undergraduates, who were taken with its exaggerated vehemence and general foolishness. About this period also—according to Mr. Henry Slatter—Shelley wrote a third novel, in conjunction with Hogg, and gave it the title "Leonora," probably the name of the heroine. The printers who began to set it up refused to proceed on account of the "free notions" which were interwoven with the narrative, and Shelley took it to a printer at Abingdon named King; the latter had nearly completed the printing of it, when the premature extinction of "Leonora" occurred owing to the abrupt expulsion of both its authors from Oxford on account of Shelley's famous tractate on the Necessity of Atheism.

It is time that the reader should be more adequately introduced to Shelley's great friend and associate during the short period of his college life.

Thomas Jefferson Hogg was the son of a gentleman

had nothing in common with Shelley ; but he had a commanding presence, was clever, and even intellectual, and had a general vitality that charmed the younger of the two. The chief intellectual bond which united them was their common love of the great Greek and Latin poets and philosophers ; but, from the outset, Hogg sincerely admired while he never quite understood his brilliant friend. In his invaluable record of his friend Shelley's life at Oxford, he has occasionally allowed his imagination to fill up the blanks of memory, but in the main his account is accurate. A real friendship united the two young men ; even where Hogg laughed at Shelley's enthusiastic poet, he admired the noble, ardent, and refined character of the youth, and where Shelley differed materially from his elder companion he was never blind to his mental powers, his kindly worldliness, his general cynicism. So closely linked are the Oxford experiences of Hogg and Shelley that it is impossible to dissociate them whenever we think of this period of the poet's life.

It is impracticable to give Hogg's narrative in all its vivid detail, but as his is the only authentic record of this time, I shall endeavour to adequately condense it from those ever-fascinating pages dealing with "Shelley at Oxford." Hogg the Oxonian was a very different individual from the egotistical and soured Hogg, "the man of the world," who in 1858 so markedly betrayed his incapacity to appropriately continue his story of the

(that is, about the end of October) that Hogg made acquaintance of Shelley. Had he known that a few months later their acquaintanceship would lead to his expulsion from Oxford, he would not have invited the newcomer to his rooms, as he frankly did. "I happened one day to sit next to a freshman at dinner; it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where the others were very young. He seemed thoughtful and abstract. He ate little, and had no acquaintance with any one. One or other broke the ice, and the conversation turned upon German and Italian poetry, the boyish freshman impetuously maintaining his admiration of the former. Both were so interested, that the clearing of the table found them still in animated discussion. Hogg invited his new friend to his rooms; and while Shelley discoursed with wonderful facility and enthusiasm, he lost gradually lost interest in the subject of argument, and paid more and more attention to his vivacious companion.

"I had leisure to examine, and I may add, to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his hands and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped much, that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive

his head, were, in fact, unusually small ; yet the last *appeared* of remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual ; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration, that characterizes the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls), of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognized the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it. I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science and his thirst for knowledge. I seemed to have found in him all those intellectual qualities which I had vainly expected to meet with in a university. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence. ‘ This is a fine, clever fellow ! ’ I said to myself, ‘ but I can never bear his society ; I shall never be able to endure his voice ; it would kill me. What a pity it is ! ’ I am very sensible of imperfections, and especially of painful sounds—and the voice of the stranger was excruciating ; it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant ; of the most cruel intension—it was perpetual, and without any remission—it excoriated the ears.<sup>1</sup> He continued to discourse of

chemistry, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing before the fire, and sometimes pacing about the room."

Next day Hogg paid a visit to Shelley's rooms. He found his new acquaintance quite unaware of the lapse of time, but glad to see his late host. Shelley appeared unwell, and troubled at his scout's presence, but brightened up after Hogg had started the fire and made the room look more comfortable. Hogg, who had imagined the young undergraduate to be purely of a literary turn, was amazed at the "scientific chaos" he perceived around him.

"Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with money, stockings, prints, crutches, bags, and boxes, were scattered on the floor and in every place; as if the young chemist, in order to analyze the mystery of creation, had endeavoured first to reconstruct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope, and large glass jars and receivers, were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. Upon the table by his side were some books lying open, several letters, a bundle of new pens, and a bottle of Japan ink, that served as an inkstand; a piece of deal, lately part of the lid of a box, with many chips, and a handsome razor that had been used as a knife. There were bottles of soda water, sugar, pieces of lemon,

high natural counter-tenor." On the other hand, there are equally

supported the tongs, and these upheld a small gasolene argand lamp. I had not been seated many minutes before the liquor in the vessel boiled over, adding fresh stains to the table, and rising in fumes with a most disagreeable odour. Shelley snatched the glass quickly, and dashing it in pieces among the ashes under the grate, increased the unpleasant and penetrating effluvia."

A little further on Hogg relates how it was he was often able to go on with his studies even while in Shelley's company, for the poet was wont to be overcome during the evening by extreme drowsiness for some three or four hours. Some delightful pages follow describing their intellectual excursions, and also their wanderings in the neighbourhood of Oxford; Shelley's fondness for pistol-practice; and his passion for making paper boats and setting them a-sail on any stream or pool he encountered. Valueless papers, envelopes, mere notes, and at last cherished epistles would go to the formation of these paper navies, while Hogg would look on with impatience, and not without occasional resentment when cold and hunger induced him to regard his companion as somewhat feather-brained. Anecdote after anecdote follows, each illustrative of the many-sided character of the poet, and all enabling us to realize the simplicity and beauty of his nature. He was a voracious reader, and his reading was not of the kind which young men as a rule indulge in very assiduously: Plato, Plutarch, Euripides, Lucretius, and Lucan were among the authors whose books he was wont to peruse with the same eagerness as when at Brent-

dence, chiefly on speculative philosophy and religion, and among his most favoured epistolary disputants were impressionable young ladies, including pretty Harriet Grove. Partly as the immediate outcome of this correspondence, partly from his earnest study of Locke's treatise on the Understanding and of Hume's Essays, notes began to accumulate: a precipitate of these was made, and the result was the famous tractate on the Necessity of Atheism.

In this dissertation Shelley sets forth the statement that all belief rests on the conviction of—(1) the senses, (2) the reason, (3) testimony. The argument proceeds that in the case of the Deity none of these proofs are available, and the tractate concludes with that favourite device of the not very clear as well as of the clear of mind—a *Q. E. D.* The essay was afterwards incorporated in the "Notes to Queen Mab." The tract was printed at Worthing, and the author managed to persuade Munday, of Oxford, to allow it to be sold at his shop. It was even advertised in *The Oxford University and City Herald* as about to be published. It was sown broadcast, the author himself acting as the main distributor. This method of proselytizing was continued when Shelley produced his Irish pamphlets. Enclosed in envelopes to dignities and persons of repute, it brought discussion to the obscure author, to whom discussion was as manna to man unhungred. Messrs. Munday and Slatter were



to indirect hints or suggestions, or to specific information. In any case, a meeting of the authorities was convened, and Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley, of University College, was summoned to answer certain questions. Shelley refused to give either affirmation or denial, but the evidence of his handwriting was in itself sufficient for condemnation. When Hogg heard what had occurred, he generously insisted on facing the tribunal, and endeavoured to clear his friend. Thereafter he demanded that his and Shelley's case should be considered as one, and that if any penalty were to be incurred it should be shared in common. While the council were endeavouring to reach a decision it unfortunately happened that they caught sight of the two delinquents marching arm-in-arm to and fro in the quadrangle; and though the young men were only trying to possess their souls in patience until the fateful moment should arrive, their action was taken as a contumacious flaunting of their indifference in the face of their august superiors. The upshot was that on the same afternoon (March 25, 1811) a document, bearing the college seal and signed by the master and dean, was affixed to the hall door, declaring unto all readers that Percy Bysshe Shelley and Thomas Jefferson Hogg were publicly expelled for contumacy in refusing to answer certain questions put to them.

Hogg's account of the incident and Shelley's own

for reproduction of details concerning this unfortunate event. Shelley felt his expulsion keenly, was almost prostrated by the sentence when he found it irrevocable, and was only saved from utter wretchedness by his growing anger and indignation at what he considered gross injustice on the part of the authorities. There is no question but that the latter acted foolishly as well as uncharitably in their extreme procedure—some milder punishment, even a sentence of rustication, would have been ample, and much more just. That they were wholly reprehensible, as some Shelleyan enthusiasts would have us consider, it is absurd to assert. The young men had distinctly brought themselves within the sphere of insubordination; and for insubordination, whether morally justifiable or not, there is naturally punishment. Many Shelleyans speak as if Shelley and Hogg had been entitled to the full privileges of manhood: a great mistake, for while no official dicta can interfere with independence of judgment on the part of undergraduates, they can very materially affect any public expression thereof. In the majority of cases an undergraduate is not a man, though college youths are always "men": he is simply in a pleasant limbo between manhood and schoolboyhood. Generally, undergraduates are boys in years, tastes, and manners; and as "superior boys" it is on the whole as well that they should be ruled over. Hence, while we may reprobate the severity of the college council which expelled Shelley and Hogg, we

here most unbiassed persons will agree, whether, intellectually, their sympathies be with Shelley or with his judges.

On both sides there was great heat; otherwise the issue would have been different. Had the undergraduates been given a week, or even a few days, to consider their position, some compromise would indubitably have been arrived at. That the council regretted having dispensed such summary justice is evident from the fact that at the last moment the delinquents were informed they need not actually leave on the morrow of their sentence—information which fell on ears stubborn through scornful wrath. Probably, even, if an appeal had been made, the council's decision would have been negatived so far as concerned the sentence of expulsion. It is useless to speculate on what did not happen, yet one cannot but wonder how very different Shelley's life might have been had he remained at Oxford for the usual period. He would almost certainly not have married Harriet Westbrook, an event which was the beginning of much sorrow and suffering, transitory happiness, and intransient pain—one which also ushered in years of splendid, and in some ways of unparalleled, achievement in literature.

On the morning of March 26th, after a gloomy breakfast, relieved in part, no doubt, by Hogg's unflagging good spirits, the two "martyrs" (as it was a consolation to them to consider themselves as such) were taken

divine sleep of youth whereof no council could defraud them.

With this incident the record of Shelley's boyhood and youth terminates : henceforth he is to be considered as having entered upon the troublous state of manhood. I have dwelt at some length upon these early years of the great poet, for they are full of interest and significance for all students of his life and work. In the case of many men of letters the biographer could dismiss the years of adolescence in a chapter, and would even do well sometimes to content himself with a few introductory passages ; but there are certain authors whose lives require to be considered from childhood, whose early formative experiences it would be unwise not to recount with as ample detail as practicable.

It was a great sorrow to Shelley to leave Oxford. Although not in sympathy with its institutions, nor, as already stated, appreciative of certain aspects of its mental and spiritual life, he loved it for its beauty, its natural environment, its facilities for culture, its easy possibilities of seclusion. The brief period he spent in the ancient city was one of the happiest seasons in a life that was ever too emotional and high-strung to withstand the discords and perpetual jars which beset even mortals whom the stars of fortune have marked out as children of eternity.

### CHAPTER III.

THE age of eighteen and a half years is an early period at which to withstand assaults against both one's dignity and one's heart. In his expulsion from Oxford, Shelley's pride was sorely wounded, though there was something soothing to him in the thought that he had endured disgrace in a righteous cause. What was a more keenly felt blow was the final upbreak of the definite or understood engagement between himself and his pretty cousin, Harriet Grove. In his desire to emancipate her (Shelley was always desirous of emancipating somebody, and would probably prove an intolerable nuisance among either the saints or the damned of the "Paradiso" or the "Inferno" of the orthodox) from the fetters of conventionality and an obsolete faith, the young enthusiast not only alarmed Miss Grove herself, but also her worthy parents. The result was the conclusion of the hopes which both or either entertained of the closer union of marriage. Shelley

mental being. Nine out of ten kids fall in love ere they emerge from their teens, some much more passionately than Shelley did at any time of his life. When Shelley loved, his affections centred on two individuals—the person whom he regarded with the bodily eye, and the glorified or idealized “double” who dominated his imagination—and as a rule the passion of his nature expended itself upon the “double.” Unlike Keats, he had no cause to dread the approach of Love : he had no premonition of consuming fires which would waste and destroy if they were not quenched. He would gladly have married his cousin, but when the union was tabooed he sorrowed, sulked, pulled himself together had one or two slight relapses, and then thought about it seriously no more. It was not long after “the crushing blow” that he was taken by the pretty face of another Harriet, in the autumn succeeding his marriage with whom Miss Grove was happily joined in matrimony to a wealthy squire, who, if not so young and handsome as “Bysshe,” was “a very tolerable gentleman,” and held no obnoxious Radical opinions.

The reader will remember that Shelley and Hogg spent the night of their arrival in London at a coffee-house near Piccadilly. Before they went to bed they made a call on the Groves, and spent a very dull evening ; thereafter, about two in the morning, they called upon the naturally astonished Medwin. Next morning the search for lodgings was commenced, and rooms were

his proposal to return to Field Place, and bring with him his companion in misfortune, he was informed by his father that his reception into the family circle again depended entirely on his agreeing to dissociate himself from Hogg, and even cease all correspondence with him. Hogg at this time came in for the greater blame, with some reason perhaps, owing to his superiority in age. Percy indignantly declined to agree to what he considered would be an act of gross ingratitude and disloyalty, and the consequence was that his irate father told him to provide for himself. Shelley therefore found himself on his own resources, and if it had not been for the kindness of his friends, including his unselfish young sisters and their schoolmate, Harriet Westbrook, he would have fared indeed for a time.

A great deal of abuse has been lavished upon Mr. Timothy Shelley, afterwards Sir Timothy, for his so-called rigour to his son. From all accounts it is easy to gather that Shelley's father was a kindly-natured choleric English gentleman, a country squire, and with his full share of the prejudices and narrow views which country gentry are commonly supposed to display. If fate had dealt somewhat unkindly with Percy Bysshe Shelley in making him the child of an unsympathising father, it was no less disagreeable to Mr. Timothy in giving him a poet and an enthusiast for his son and heir. The worthy squire did not understand or care anything about humanity and its rights. What was

of Guardians and the House of Commons to set all possible discords into a delightful harmony? Justice for all, freedom of thought and expression, equality of laws, rectification of long-standing abuses, adjustment of the principles dominating the relationship between capital and labour, the alteration of the marriage and divorce laws—in a word, the people *versus* the privileged minority—all this was wearisome rhodomontade to the squire of Field Place. When we consider his training, position, and views, we must in common fairness admit that, under very trying circumstances, Timothy Shelley at the worst behaved blunderingly and hot headedly. It is beyond question that he was a well-intentioned, kindly gentleman, of a class which fortunately is becoming more and more restricted every decade. There is not much gain if, in the attainment of true liberalism, of true radicalism, we cannot sympathise with conservatism and prejudice. An illiberal radical (type of a tribe which unfortunately is at present innumerable and influential) is not only a much more objectionable individual, but a more potent enemy of free thought, of national and personal freedom, than the most thoroughgoing Tory of the Timothy Shelley type. Undeniably the squire of Field Place was often very foolish, and his foolishness was of a



most patient of relatives and friends come to the same temper which will be as uncompromising in an affair of domestic etiquette as in a matter of vital importance. As so often happens between two radically different natures, even when each is anxious to meet the other half-way, Mr. Timothy Shelley and his son found themselves in constant disagreement. The squire was anxious to do what he could for the strange youth, whom he wholly failed to understand, and in the main he acted not heartlessly if undeniably foolishly and with unnecessary bluster. The most entertaining account of him is to be found in the brilliant narrative of Hogg, though naturally he is not represented there in his best aspects. Mrs. Shelley has always remained a somewhat shadowy figure. Percy seems to have had a real affection for her, but to have been chilled by the fact that in the disturbances which his ways of life and thought, even as a boy, caused at Field Place she sided with her husband. In the first place, it was natural for her to do so; in the next, she as naturally feared that his influence over his sisters might be permanently prejudicial. She seems to have affected his life, for good or evil, in an exceptionally slight degree.

Notwithstanding Mr. Shelley's favourable opinion of Hogg, formed at the dinner at Miller's Hotel (so amusingly described by Shelley's friend)—where he had

repeated and even more emphatic sentence of exclusion from Field Place was shortly pronounced against the two friends, save on conditions to which Bysshe absolutely declined to agree. The choleric member for New Shoreham (a dignity of which he seems to have been inordinately proud) endeavoured by various means to bring about a separation between Hogg and his son, with the result, finally, that the former received a parental notice to leave London and begin his legal experiences in the north.

On Shelley's distinct refusal to meet his father's wishes he received a message to the effect that he was forbidden Field Place, that monetary supplies would be stopped, and that he would thenceforth have to provide for himself. On the face of it, this seems a hard doom to be pronounced by a wealthy gentleman against a son whose main offence was a consistency (or stubbornness—either term equally appropriate, according to point of view) on a par with that parentally displayed. But though the young poet was certainly wrathful, and probably taken aback at the turn of affairs, he did not in consequence endure any hardship. The loyal companion who had left Oxford with him lent him money; small sums of cash were sent to him by his sisters; and his Uncle Pilfold gave him both an affectionate welcome and material assistance. Possibly, also, Shelley knew his father well enough to be assured that the latter would not remain

very eager that she and Hogg should fall in love with each other. Already the youthful philosopher-poet had resented the existent marriage laws, as hurtful to the true well-being of society, and was prepared to go to almost any extremes in order to emphasize his aversion from an unjust and evil state of things, and to help on the much-needed reformation. He would thus have gladly seen his sister and Hogg live together by private contract, that is, without either civil or ecclesiastical sanction, and even those who condemn his principles must admit that Shelley was here, as at all times, prepared to act up to his convictions. He would willingly himself have lived in an union unsanctioned by any marriage ceremony; though he came to recognize that, as long as an undue proportion of discomfort and suffering of mind and body has to be borne by women, it would be unkind, unjust, and unwise to demand of them a sacrifice so completely beyond anything required of men. In his statement of his views on the marriage question, Shelley, in his early years, allowed himself to be carried away by indignation and the zeal of reformation. Blinded by the combined light of what he saw and detested and what his imaginative mind pictured forth for his solace and delight, he seemed oblivious to all the wrong and suffering which would inevitably succeed any abrupt and arbitrary change in the laws regulating the marital relationship of men and women. He was disheartened at

the slow progress made towards what he believed to be the higher civilization ; he would fain have lived to see the laws against which he was wont so vehemently to protest, speedily disappear. He believed in the ultimate national realisation of a truer conception of marriage ; and he foresaw that divorce and other allied subjects would soon or late come to be discussed with at least comparative freedom from prejudice. It must ever be remembered to his credit that at a time when to utter a word against the still unreformed institution of marriage was perhaps considered a more heinous offence than to express a disbelief in the Deity, he had the courage to protest with all his power against what he considered to be an evil and a tyrannical state of things.

It has been supposed that it was about this time Shelley wrote a " Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things," for the purpose of assisting a certain patriot of the name of Finnerty, who had been imprisoned for libel. It is really doubtful if the authorship can be attributed to him, but, except for Shelleyan specialists, it really is a matter of no moment whether or not Shelley wrote the " Poetical Essay " ; what is of interest is the undeniable fact that in his practical sympathy with the patriot-journalist, Finnerty, we have another instance of Shelley's habit of letting hand and heart act in unison.

Harriet Westbrook. That even after the g  
ledge of this young girl Shelley thought highly of her  
is fairly clear from the fact that, in a letter to Stock-  
dale the publisher (January 11, 1811), he particularly  
requests that a copy of the just-issued "St. Irvyne" be  
sent to her at a specified address. After Mr. Timothy  
Shelley's exclusion of his son from Field Place, Percy's  
sisters vented their sympathetic emotion upon the not  
unwilling ears of the romantically-inclined Harriet. When  
the latter went home for a time she became the medium  
for the transmission of the small sums which his sisters  
managed to save for their martyr brother; to her Shelley  
appeared an altogether superior being, shamefully ill-  
treated—and to the poet she came almost as a minister-  
ing angel. Harriet was a really pretty, according to some  
accounts a lovely, girl, with beautiful hair, brilliant com-  
plexion, a pleasant voice, and a bright and cheerful  
manner. When she yielded her affections to Shelley she  
was only sixteen. The Westbrooks were not a family  
with which either Sir Bysshe or Mr. Timothy Shelley  
would naturally like the future head of "the house" to  
be closely connected. Mr., commonly called Jew,  
Westbrook, was a well-to-do coffee-house keeper; in  
addition to his functions as a tavern host he was wont to  
add those of a money-lender, hence his sobriquet—for  
there does not seem to have been any real basis for the  
statement that the relatives of Shelley's first wife were of  
the Jewish race. The family lived in Chapel Street, near

consisted of Miss Elizabeth (the "Eliza" of the Shelley letters and biographies) and of Miss Harriet—the elder sister (older by a good many years) a sour, affected, interfering, and troublesome woman; the younger full of spirit, and at once charming and comely. Partly from romantic sentiment, partly from genuine affection, Harriet Westbrook discovered that she "cared for" Mr. Percy Shelley, poet and reformer. Her elder sister would fain have won that young gentleman for herself, but when she realized that he was insensible to her physical and mental attractions, she did her best to ensure a union between him and her sister. The Westbrooks would not have tolerated Shelley had it not been for the circumstances of his birth and prospects; and it was only when Mr. Westbrook ultimately discovered that the heir to the baronetcy in succession to the squire of Field Place was perverting (Shelley considered it *converting*) his daughter's views, and at the same time steering clear of any definite engagement, that he sought to put an end to, or place some check upon, the young man's attentions.

When Harriet Westbrook first knew Shelley she held, as was natural, no pronounced opinions of any kind. Whom the poet loved he proselytized. When she first learned that Percy was an atheist Harriet was shocked, but to his religious, philosophical, and social views she ere long lent a ready ear. She was a clever girl, more intellectually inclined and more widely cultured than the majority of young ladies at that period, and in

ever, which were of more vital import than any similarity of views upon mental problems. The young people saw more and more of each other, and, when they were separated, an active correspondence was maintained. It is tolerably clear that Shelley's interest was at least in great part due to his desire to make the most of the good chances afforded him by fate for the saving of a human spirit from the thralldom of conventionality and effete faith. If his views had been powerfully attracted to an opposite pole of thought, or religious conviction, he would have looked upon Harriet as a "brand" to be "pluckt from the burning." The outcome of the tragedy which began with the elopement of the young lovers was sad enough to invest any recital of their brief married life with an ever-imminent shadow.

We can see from Shelley's letters to Hogg (who in April left London at his father's summons) that he had nothing either of the early reticence or the later communicativeness of the lover. His friend, noticing the frequency of Shelley's allusions to having seen Miss Harriet Westbrook, allusions generally familiarly expressed, naturally concluded that something more ardent than ordinary liking was entertained for the young lady by his impressionable comrade; but to his broad hints and badinage on this subject Shelley only replied with perfect *sang-froid* that his correspondent was mistaken, and that though he liked his "little friend," there was no likelihood of love.

reconciled as to permit of the latter's paying a visit to Field Place. The result of this visit was an arrangement whereby Mr. Shelley agreed to allow his son an annuity of £200, with full permission for Bysshe to reside wheresoever he chose, and to pursue his own way of life, but on the understanding that though he might correspond he was to have no personal communication with Hogg. The terms were reluctantly accepted, but the young poet rejoiced at the comparative freedom he could now enjoy. If the annuity seems a rather small sum when we consider Mr. Shelley's means, it must be remembered that the amount in question would certainly go further in the early part of the century than now. Shelley, moreover, was only a boy in years, and probably his father thought a small annuity would, from every point of view, be better for his son than an allowance which would enable him to indulge in "freaks" which might have a baneful effect upon his after-life. Bysshe was quite aware that he was heir to a large fortune, but he also had no expectation of ever enjoying it. The fear, or rather the conviction, of early death had taken possession of him. Like many young men of an imaginative bent, he was more conscious of the shadow cast by the beauty of life than of its exceeding brightness. The most joyous music has ever somewhere, howsoever subtly indeterminate, a pathetic note; and in the jubilant music



meanwhile. He had dreams of poetic greatness, but he doubted if he would live long enough to snatch a single fadeless laurel from the ever-reluctant hand of Fame. Dominated, from his boyhood onward, by an intense ardour of enthusiasm in the cause of the suffering and the oppressed, he was more anxious to do some little measure of good in his day than to sing the fairest songs. He would fain have followed Christ, but not as the Christians do. To work for suffering humanity, to break down the barriers of caste and prejudice, to help to inaugurate the new kingdom of righteousness in strict accordance with the socialistic doctrines of the Nazarene prophet—to an aim such as this he would gladly have solely devoted himself. That he became more and more the poet, the singer, and less the practical reformer (though never less the prophet and seer) is a matter to be thankful for so far as we are concerned, though it is certain that, in his early manhood at any rate, Shelley would rather have thrown in his lot with the active iconoclasts than with those who stand aloof and sing.

From his ready and uncomplaining acceptance of his father's offer, moreover, we can draw an important inference—namely, that he had not at that time the slightest idea of marriage with Miss Westbrook. Shelley was never without a fair amount of shrewdness in the conduct of monetary affairs, and had he foreseen what was shortly so unexpectedly to happen, he would undoubtedly have stipulated for a more adequate allowance.

to which he was subject throughout life, and spent the ensuing weeks, now at Field Place, now at his Uncle Pillfold's house at Cuckfield, now in London, and for a brief while at his Cousin Grove's place—Cwm Eilan, near Rhayader, in North Wales. At the time the beauty of the Welsh mountain scenery does not seem to have strongly affected him, though that it insensibly impressed him is clear from the autobiographical passages in some of his poems written within the next few years. He was mentally too perturbed to care much for scenery at this period of his life. It must also be remembered that Shelley the poet was an outgrowth of Shelley the political reformer and humanitarian enthusiast, and of Shelley the writer of crude romances. Up to the composition of "Queen Mab" (1812) he wrote no poetry of any value: and his real poetic life may not inappropriately be stated to have practically commenced with "Alastor: and other Poems" (1815-16).

It was during Shelley's visit to Rhayader that Hogg received a note which astonished him. He learned that his friend would probably, ere long, be in York, *with Harriet Westbrook*; that the latter's father had "persecuted her in a most horrible way by endeavouring to compel her to go to school;" that Harriet had appealed to the writer, whose advice (*of course*) was to resist such stupendous and appalling tyranny; that she had written to the effect that she threw herself upon his protection,

require his emphatic persuasion for Shelley to throw his principles overboard and determine to repay Harriet's trust with the reward of a legal marriage. Theoretically, it would have been a higher morality for Shelley to have acted consistently with his firm convictions ; practically, none can regret his having acted as any gentleman would have done. It is not so easy to excuse him for, later on, permitting his children to be baptized—an application of the spirit of compromise which shows how weak even a great man can sometimes be.

As soon as he had returned to London he made hurried preparations for elopement. He was in a ferment of excitement, and allowed himself (probably was for the moment incapable of thinking out his position) no time for consideration. He admired and sincerely regarded Harriet Westbrook. To the social distinction between the heir to a baronetcy and great wealth and the daughter of a tavern-keeper, howsoever respectable, Shelley was naturally wholly indifferent ; to her charms of mind and body, her accomplishments as a musician, a reader, and (to Shelley—essential characteristic) a listener, he would not have been the youth he was had he not been keenly sensitive. Even her trimness and neatness, a kind of exquisite completeness which characterized her appearance, attracted one who was seldom neat and never trim, whose wild eyes and dishevelled locks startled or offended many worthy people, and whose habits and common demeanour were so unlike those of most young men. Harriet had

Westbrook having decided to send his sixteen-year-old daughter to school for another half-year it is not easy for ordinary mortals to perceive. Keen suffering, sorrow, and remorse would have been avoided had Mr. Westbrook been able to prevent the elopement of his daughter with Percy Shelley, or had the latter behaved with somewhat less Quixotic chivalry, and insisted on Harriet's remaining in pupilage for at least the specified six months. However, as Shelley had sown for the whirlwind, he had, by the law of nature, to realize its violence when its time was come. To him the reasons for elopement seemed not only justifiable but good, and not only good, but imperative. As for Harriet Westbrook, most fair-minded persons will decide that she deserves neither praise nor blame. She had come to entertain the same opinions as those which Shelley had communicated to her, verbally and orally; and she plainly thought she was acting up to the high moral philosophy of the Shelleyan Persuasion in refusing the ignominy of a return to school, and in throwing herself upon her preceptor's charge. That the Westbrooks, or at any rate that Eliza Westbrook, schemed towards the due fulfilment of a marriage between the young people, is fairly clear; but I am convinced that Harriet was innocent of aught save a sense (with a charm of its own) of impropriety in going anywhere with Shelley until their union had been sanctioned. That she fully realized what she was doing is unlikely. Had Shelley said nothing to her, she would probably have eloped with

signified, she would, in all likelihood, have rescinded her decision as to accompanying him, whatever domestic course she might have taken. She was unmistakably in love with the idolized brother of her friends Elizabeth and Hellen Shelley, but it is even more indubitable that Shelley did not return her affection as a lover. He expressly spoke in one of his letters to Hogg as being actuated more by will ("exerted action" is the exact phrase) than by "inspired passion." In a word, a romantic young girl of sixteen fell in love with an ardent and enthusiastic youth of nineteen; the latter regarded her as a probable recruit to the great army of practical reformers, and was more eager for her conversion than for any loverlike favours. In the brief space which elapsed between his return to London and his elopement with Harriet Westbrook, Shelley passed from exultation and exaltation—exultation at Harriet's surrender and trust, exaltation arising from the glow which warms the heart of the successful proselytizer who sees a disciple take on a willing martyrdom—to doubt, anxiety, and despondency.

Early one morning towards the end of August (1811), Shelley and his cousin Charles Grove met Harriet and drove to the inn in Gracechurch Street, whence the Edinburgh coach at that time departed. No adverse fate brought any Shelleyan or Westbrook authority upon the scene, and in the gathering dusk—for the north mail did not leave till the evening—the fugitives

day after leaving London, the bridegroom-designate had begun to realize that this harsh and tyrannous world has an ignoble but insatiable desire for cash. With something of that same audacity which had once prompted him to write, under an assumed name, to the great preacher Rowland Hill and offer to address his congregation for him, Bysshe had successfully applied to his uncle Medwin for £25, for elopement expenses—without, however, specifying the object of the loan. £25, however, does not go far, when coach and inn and other incidental expenses have to be incurred for two young people, neither of them possessed of worldly knowledge or accustomed to carefully calculate expenditure. While they rested to change horses, Shelley scribbled a hasty line to Hogg, for deliverance at his friend's rooms in York on the morrow. This message is short, but, like the Japanese dog, unfolds tale after tale: "Harriet is with me. We are in a slight pecuniary distress. We shall have £75 on Sunday, until when can you send £10?" O unanthropomorphic Deity of the Iconoclasts, is this your reward to so ardent and unflagging a disciple? Must this young poet-enthusiast-reformer-protester endure the abomination of an empty purse, even as common folk—yea, even on his elopement journey? It were enough to make such an one accept a Government pension and denounce all patriots!

The £25 borrowed from Mr. Medwin thus seems to

that this was no certainty, though Shelley had good enough reason to depend on two-thirds of it, as the quarterly allowance from his father was about due. The remaining third was an expectancy from Mr. Medwin—the same friend, it will be remembered, who had already advanced a similar amount—but this sum never came, for Uncle Medwin was wrathful enough when he learned for what purpose his one advance had been employed.

At last Edinburgh was reached, and with the least delay practicable the runaways were quietly married. This event took place on the 28th of August, when Percy Bysshe Shelley, *ætat* 19, became the lawful husband of Harriet Westbrook, *ætat* 16. As Professor Dowden has pointed out, the irony of fate was not wholly absent, for in the books of the registrar Shelley is set down as a Sussex farmer!

Like a dutiful son, Bysshe immediately conveyed to his father the news of his marriage. Probably he expected a letter in return characteristically full of abuse, affection, and exaggerated vehemence; but he was certainly not prepared to find himself once more thrown on his own resources. Supplies were stopped, even the quarterly allowance then due was retained, and "all was at an end." It would have gone badly with Shelley at this time had it not been for Hogg, and, in a greater degree, for his Uncle Pilfold, who had taken a fancy to his enthusiastic, wonderful, eccentric, puzzling, lovable nephew; and who in time of need behaved in a

Shelley wrote to Mr. John Hogg to announce his son's latest escapade he did so succinctly : " My son has withdrawn from my protection," he wrote, " and has set off for Scotland with a young female."

Here was depravity, even crime, indeed. Atheism was nothing to it. If Shelley had wronged the girl who trusted him, and had simply departed for a while with his mistress, Sir Bysshe and Mr. Timothy Shelley would have severely reprimanded, but would not have found it very hard to forgive him. " Young blood " and " wild oats " are convenient phrases to cover many brutalities and meannesses. But to marry, actually to marry, a coffee-house keeper's daughter—this was too much.

While Field Place was in as dire confusion and dismay as the Tuileries on that August morning in '92 when the tocsin of revolt sounded far and wide, the young husband and wife were spending their days happily enough in the Scottish capital.

Hogg was not long in joining his friends. Readers of these pages who are unacquainted with that biographer's record of the Edinburgh experiences of the trio are to be envied, for they have a pleasure before them. Hogg always narrates well, and few romances are more entertaining than the first part of his life of Shelley. How they laughed, these young people, at all the depressing solemnities of the worthy Presbyterian folk at the awful prayers and still more dreadful ser-



sighing despondency, or break into a shriek of wild, eldritch, incontrollable laughter followed by abrupt departure amidst an universal scowl from the offended congregation.

Some weeks passed pleasantly enough, though Hogg and even Shelley were occasionally bored by the placid pleasure which Harriet took in reading aloud certain highly intellectual and ethical classical works ; the poet was wont to fall asleep, much to his young wife's disapproval and discontent. Even at this early period of her matrimonial life, and when she was undoubtedly happy, Harriet frequently spoke of suicide not only as a justifiable act under certain circumstances, but as permissible in most cases—nay, further, of the possibility that she would herself at some future date put her theory into practice. Not only to Hogg, but to strangers, she would refer to suicide as calmly and resolutely as if she were merely referring to a prospective change to another country ; even at school she had entertained the idea—when distraught or even perturbed by any girlish unhappiness—of self-murder. If Hogg's account be credible, and his statements bear every sign of genuineness, Harriet even attempted suicide while at the seminary at Clapham Common. In a most interesting letter of Shelley's addressed to Miss Hitchener within two months from his marriage, he describes the circumstances which led to his elopement with Mr. Westbrook's younger daughter, and therein incidentally refers to the fact that suicide

had always been a favourite theme with Harriet, but that he had discountenanced it as the alternative to undesired life save when one had become convinced of utter uselessness and experienced unappeasable unhappiness.

It is necessary for the reader to bear these facts in mind, as we approach the record of that catastrophe which was the cause of so much misery to all concerned, and has ever since been the source of so much acrimonious dispute among all sorts and conditions of men. It seems beyond reasonable doubt to those who have really gone into the affair in all its bearings, that Harriet Shelley was abnormally insensitive to certain matters to which most men and women are keenly alive, that, in a word, she had either an exceptional stoicism or a bluntness of feeling germane to—if not the symptom of the condition of—a partially diseased brain. It would be unjust to her, however, not to concede that in the ordinary course of life she was a cheerful, clever, and amiable person, and that as a wife she was as sympathetic as her nature permitted, and in all things dutiful and loyal.

Those but slightly acquainted with Shelley the poet might easily imagine Shelley the man to have been keenly sensitive to the beauty of ancient buildings and the picturesque aspects of ruins, and all that was at once venerable and lovely. But he was no lover of the by-

and enthralled many true poets as well as generation after generation of men—at all fascinated Shelley. Even that enchanted valley of Bethzatanai, of which he afterwards wrote, would at this period of his life have seemed to him infinitely wearisome had the dwellers therein yielded never to any iconoclastic frenzy, denounced no one nor anything, made no endeavour after a more ideal state. Neither Holyrood, facing the rugged slopes of the Craigs, nor York Minster looking serenely along the flow of the quiet Ouse, interested him so much as a debate upon Irish politics, or a philosophical epistle from the divine Miss Hitchener. The lady just named was a friend whom Shelley idealized to the seventh heaven. At this time the star of Miss Hitchener shone most radiantly in his mental vision; the hardly less splendid though ruddier light of Hogg illumined the same imaginary sphere, wherein shone briskly and vividly enough the inferior brilliancy of Harriet.

Thus it was that five weeks in Edinburgh more than sufficed for Shelley, and that a move south came to be determined upon. In addition to his disgust at the repellent, and to him grossly unspiritual, Presbyterianism then rampant in the Scottish capital, his lack of sympathy with the intellectual tastes and aims of those with whom he came in contact, and the fever of mental and physical disquiet which henceforth, with ever rarer and shorter intervals, held him thrall, there was the necessity of economy. For some time then and thereafter he lived

York was decided upon, and thither one morning in October the three companions set out from their pleasant rooms in George Street. Although the expense could be ill afforded, Harriet's wish as to travelling by private post-chaise rather than by coach was acceded to. The journey, an uncomfortable one, occupied three days. To Hogg's surprise an inn was selected, but Shelley explained that he had determined to make a sudden journey south to see if he could not soothe the paternal wrath, and obtain the necessary means, the absence of which was daily becoming more serious.

Immediately after Shelley's departure Miss Eliza Westbrook appeared upon the scene. Even if we considerably discount Hogg's remarks concerning Harriet's sister, it is difficult to find her in any way attractive. Shelley, however, does not seem to have then keenly disliked even if he did not actually like Eliza Westbrook, and there were excellent reasons for her stand-off attitude towards Hogg.

An amusing, a clever, a good-natured, and in some respects loyal companion, Hogg was utterly without high principle. When his desires were strong, they had to be gratified; that was his philosophy. He was an epicurean in the mistaken sense of the term; in his philosophy was little of the beauty and dignity of the true epicureanism. By an act of criminal folly during Shelley's absence he shattered the latter's high ideal of friendship and caused him poignant grief and suffer-

took advantage of his friend's absence to endeavour to seduce his wife. His action is inexcusable howsoever regarded; but doubly so when it is certain that he had never the faintest hint of encouragement. Harriet repulsed him indignantly, and Hogg at last so far realized his shame as to offer to write to Shelley and confess all; an offer which Mrs. Shelley, knowing her husband's nature, wisely declined, though she decided that the matter could not be kept from him on his return. It is Hogg himself who bears witness to the fact that morality was Harriet's favourite theme, and that she found most pleasure in works of a high ethical tone. Yet, notwithstanding his knowledge that her chosen mind-companions were Telemachus and Belisarius, he imagined that the young girl would listen to his passion and act shamefully and treacherously at once to her ideals and her husband.

When Shelley returned, he saw that something unpleasant had occurred. The two friends went out into the fields, and there the sin was duly confessed. Contrite and ashamed as Hogg really seems to have been, Shelley was too shocked to be at first aware of anything save the spiritual tumult of his fallen ideals and ruined hopes. Ultimately he extended a sorrowful forgiveness to his friend, though he realized that they could never again be to each other what in the past they had been. Even in his generosity, however, Shelley saw that they must part company, so without informing Hogg he gave directions for an immediate departure.

the latter, and the question of means was becoming more and more imperative.

So, early one morning in November, Shelley, accompanied by his wife and sister-in-law, left for Keswick. For some time thereafter Hogg frequently wrote asking to be taken again into the fold, but Shelley, though almost Quixotically generous and loyal, resolutely declined to see him yet awhile. At Keswick the young people resided in a small house called Claremont Cottage, from the garden of which can be had (for it still exists) a lovely view of Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite against the heights which rise towards the lofty summits of Hindsgarth, Skiddaw, and Scawfell. Here Shelley enjoyed, as he had never hitherto done, the ever-varying loveliness and wonder of mountain beauty. Especially in mid-winter, when the skies were clear, the atmosphere radiant, and the hills garmented with snow, were his delight and enthusiasm called forth. While in the Lake country he came to know Southey. Between them there was only a superficial literary sympathy, and a very real social and political antagonism; as a man, however, Southey had the young poet's warm regard. Wordsworth, the most ungenial of bards to brethren-in-song, paid him no attention, and Coleridge was not then in the Lake country. The other neighbours (with the exception of William Calvert) were mostly either not very cordial or were persons with whom Shelley did not wish to associate; one of the kindest was the Duke of

for a while remained obscure, the important outcome of the visit was the relenting of Mr. Westbrook, who intimated his willingness to allow his daughter £200 a year; an intimation promptly acted upon, to the relief of the young pair, who when they went to Greystoke had hardly a guinea between them. Southey behaved with his characteristic kindness to his youthful friend. He negotiated with Shelley's landlord for a lower rent, sent linen and other household articles to the cottage, and lent books from his voluminous library. Unfortunately Shelley had idealized the elder poet too much, and the inevitable reaction in due time occurred; Southey became an apostate, a disappointing man, a renegade from the cause of humanity, and what not. A sincere regard existed between them, however, as men, I have not space wherein to dwell longer on this acquaintanceship, though tempted to do so by the remembrance of many characteristic episodes. Besides the production of a variety of short poems, more "valuable to philosophical and reflective minds" than to those who love poetry *as* poetry (ominous assurance!), Shelley spent part of the early winter in the composition of a volume of essays, presumably on political and ethical subjects, and of a romance entitled "Hubert Cauvin," which has never been discovered in manuscript or any other state. With a vivid recollection of "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne" I cannot believe we have lost much by the disappearance of this romance dealing with the revolutionary period of French history—though, doubtless, it would prove to be

prose he too often walked on stilts ; or, at least, seems to do so, so great is the contrast between his poetic music and his prose rhetoric.

In December Shelley heard through Captain Pilfold of a scheme at Field Place whereby he was to be offered at once a handsome sum in the event of his consent to entail the estates on his heir male, or, failing such, upon his younger brother. This bribe, as the poet believed it, was to amount to no less than £2,000 a year. Nothing more vividly shows Shelley's high moral resolve in a good cause, his unflinching loyalty to what he considered right, his will and power to emphasize by practical demonstration his hatred of any evil system, than his indignant refusal to entertain the proposal for a moment. Poor as he was, and with real poverty looming in the near future, he was not going to perpetuate by a selfish action the great evil of the law of primogeniture. His indignation and scorn are genuine, if expressed with Shelleyan vehemence ; the best test thereof being the fact that he refused affluence when he might have had it by appending his signature to a document drawn up, for what seemed to them a wise and good end, by his father and grandfather. That *he* could be asked to entail all this "command over labour" on a possibly altogether unworthy individual, that he should be subjected to this "insult," was more than the ardent, consistent, true-hearted young fellow



could stand. Even those who still approve of a system which many of our wisest men have condemned as unjust to individuals and harmful to the national well-being, must admit that Shelley in this matter behaved with the utmost honour and rectitude. It also is to the credit of Mr. Timothy Shelley that, though hurt and disappointed by what seemed to him his son's extraordinary and almost maniacal behaviour, he agreed, early in the ensuing year, to regrant the allowance of £200 a year. Thus, in 1812, the poet and his wife had a yearly income of £400, a sum not at all increased by any literary labour on the part of Shelley, but considerably diminished by printer's bills and charitable deeds.

Early in January Shelley discovered that William Godwin—the famous author of the “Political Justice,” which for over two lustra had charmed, repelled, and in one way or another influenced all thinking men in England—was alive. With characteristic impetuosity he wrote at once to the great man, who replied to his evidently very youthful and very ardent correspondent with a kindly letter, which at the same time intimated that he would prefer to enter into correspondence with a human being instead of with Abstract Enthusiasm. Upon this Shelley wrote a long and (to his biographers and students) most important letter. He refers to the influence that Godwin had exercised over him from the moment he first became acquainted with the “Political Justice,” gives various details concerning himself, his circumstances, his work, and his aims.

statements, one or two trivial, others more serious? Many say that he consciously lied; others maintain that he told the truth *plus* his own irregular way of doing so, laying more stress on sentiment than on fact (a very vague way of putting it); and others frankly state their belief that he wrote in all sincerity. 'This question of Shelley's veracity in small matters will perhaps never be satisfactorily settled. Professor Dowden's remarks on this subject are so much to the point that I quote a portion of them. He "was one of those men for whom the hard outline of facts in their own individual history has little fixity; whose footsteps are for ever followed and overflowed by the wave of oblivion; who remember with extraordinary tenacity the sentiment of times and of places, but lose the framework of circumstance in which the sentiment was set; and who, in reconstructing an image of the past, often unconsciously supply links and lines upon the suggestion of that sentiment or emotion which is for them the essential reality. There are not a few persons who from their own experience can vouch for the existence of such transforming powers of recollection; their lives have been for them a train of emotions and ideas rather than of events, and in recalling foregone events an involuntary artistic instinct is at work, unconsciously adapting circumstance to feelings by the aid of a winnowing wind of desire astir amid the mobile cloud-

Shelley, at any rate, with his keen sense of uncompromising morality—a sense which was active even when it was outraged by contrarious action—would have revolted from what lay in waiting.

It was while at Keswick that a burglarious attempt was made upon the Shelleyan household. The actuality of this story has been much disputed, but I confess that it seems to me entirely credible. In any case it is surely going too far to discredit Shelley's version and acquiesce in the negative assertion of an ignorant dalesman. Professor Dowden, I am glad to see, evidently believes Shelley's story, though he does not directly say so. Some time ago Mr. Hall Caine published some remarks from the opposite point of view, but instead of throwing further doubt on Shelley's statements, his remarks only seem to me to confirm the reasonable and just view. Too much has been made of the real and hallucinatory episodes in Shelley's life : at most they are merely episodes, and in no way affect his character or his actions.

In Shelley's third letter to Godwin he abruptly announces his intention to leave Keswick at once for Dublin : "I do not know exactly where. . . . We go principally *to forward as much as we can* the Catholic Emancipation." Irish politics had always fascinated the young enthusiast, and though in religion what was then called an atheist and now an agnostic, his principles were of too lofty a kind not to impel him towards temporary alliance with persons enduring a gross injustice.

sionately, reprobate was the subjection of the Catholics to an insignificant Protestant minority. Before he left Keswick he had written his famous "Address to the Irish People."

On the 3rd of February Shelley and his two companions set sail from Whitehaven for the sister island. The vessel put in at the Isle of Man, and the bad weather continuing after her departure, a northern port was made for, so that it was not until the 12th the travellers reached Dublin. They found accommodation at 7, Lower Sackville Street. Here Eliza Westbrook acted as dispenser of the funds, keeping all the Shelleyan cash "in some nook or corner of her dress." On the morrow of their arrival Shelley sought out a printer, and arranged for the publication of his "Address." It was written so as to suit the simplest readers, and was announced at the small sum of a five-penny bit. In due time the printer sent round several hundred copies of the edition of 1500, and Shelley's soul was filled with ecstasy. His aim in coming to Ireland was merely "to effect a fundamental change in the constitution of the British Empire, to restore to Ireland its native Parliament, to carry the great measure of justice called Catholic Emancipation, and to establish a philanthropic association for the amelioration of human society all over the world." If we sympathetically and somewhat sadly smile at this programme we cannot refrain

eccentricity than for general applicability. The booklets were sown broadcast : sixty public-houses rejoiced in their possession ; humble and needy strangers were employed to sell or bestow any number of copies. Shelley and Harriet took up a position in the balcony of their house ; and the Irish people literally perceived words of wisdom raining down from heaven. No doubt many a worthy citizen, resentful against England and intolerant of his country's wrongs, yet felt indignant on the sudden receipt of a book from on high upon his portly "presence" or on the crown of his well-brushed hat. A certain discrimination, however, was shown by the distributor. "I stand," writes Shelley to a friend on the eventful 27th of February, "I stand at the balcony of our window and watch till I see a man *who looks likely*. I throw a book to him."

The "Address" took captive the minds of many readers, and Shelley's name passed from mouth to mouth. At an important Catholic meeting on the 28th, quite unknown as he was to his audience, he seems to have attracted attention by his youthful fervour. At the outset he incurred some slight opposition, mainly because of some tolerant remarks concerning the Protestants. Even then he perceived that while Catholics and Protestants alike clamoured for freedom of thought and worship, freedom was the last thing either were capable of conceiving : whichever side happened to be in power, with it lay the decision as to the interpretation of that

faithful the revengeful and bigoted spirit of the Protestants. 'There is, there can be, no spiritual freedom in faiths based on dogma, supported by dogma, preaching dogma. 'This Shelley realized, and for this he has never been forgiven by the "unco' guid" of either persuasion or of the innumerable sects which derive therefrom.

But Shelley, though his most frequent phrase was "for ever," had no intention of remaining "for ever" in Dublin. As a matter of fact, in less than two months' time he realized that his mission in Ireland was over. The debased and unhappy nation had not risen *en masse* on the publication of the "Address" and its pamphlet successors; the authorities had not prosecuted "the young English gentleman"; and the world went on very much as before. 'There was no particular diminution in smoke, but the fires flamed not and the lava-flood remained inert.

In the "Address," "Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists," and the "Declaration of Rights," the author shows a keen sympathy with the oppressed, a burning indignation against the tyrannous, and considerable mental grasp and foresight. He was much ridiculed in his lifetime, and is still subjected to mild mockery, for his wild hopes. 'The most fit comment thereupon is a reference to the fact that Catholic Emancipation has taken place, that reform has been brought about, and that

ardent correspondent and friend (as well as, out of amiable politeness, his wife, and, out of civility, his sister), even as that individual yearned to see the "soul of his soul." Like Miss Westbrook, this highly intellectual and—in correspondence—attractive woman rejoiced in the name of Eliza. Whether for the reason of a suitable distinction, or because she was of too noble-spirited mould to have a name shared by numerous unintellectual and unspiritual persons, the Shelleys substituted therefor the more euphonious "Portia." In a short space of time Shelley found it expedient to change this Shakespearian designation to the "Brown Demon."

Ere long she was hated by Eliza Westbrook, disliked by Harriet Shelley, and finally repelled by the "soul of her soul." It seems she had at last to be bribed to take her departure. Yet even after the experience of the "Brown Demon" Shelley did not outgrow his tendency to invest every new and sympathetic correspondent with such hues of ideal splendour as would have made the apparition of Gabriel a tawdry spectacle.

After leaving Ireland the trio wandered about day by day until they temporarily settled in a cottage at Nantgwillt, near Rhayader, in North Wales. Thence they went to Cwm Elan, to Chepstow, and, in June, to Lynmouth. The manifold beauties of sea and sky at this loveliest spot in Devon took captive, as they well might, Shelley's imagination. The poetic impulse in him began to awake into true life. Land and ocean, the caverned shore for ever resonant with tidal music, the bounding horizon of

plidity and the mature power of sedate argument and decision, which throughout his short life characterized Shelley, is exemplified in the way in which at this time he would send his "Declaration of Rights" and other revolutionary tractates on adventurous voyages in little balloons, sealed bottles, and so forth—and in his grave and weighty "Letter to Lord Ellenborough," on the latter's judgment against a printer for having issued the third part of Paine's "Age of Reason."

The late summer of this year was one of the comparatively serene periods in Shelley's life. He was happy with his wife ; he had a kindly toleration for Eliza ; and "Portia" (by this time Miss Hitchener's name was changed again to Bessy) had not yet become the "Brown Demon." And, above all, he was beginning to realize that he was indeed a poet, though even yet he had written little or nothing on which to base a claim so often unjustifiably put forth.

In September yet another change occurred, and Shelley installed himself with the three ladies at a beautiful residence called Tannyrallt, near Tremadoc, in Carnarvonshire. Here, besides delighting in his surroundings, he practically interested himself in Mr. Madocks' great scheme for the reclamation of part of the land from the sea, and by his enthusiasm, example, and advice materially assisted the fulfilment of the project. In his eagerness to be of further use he even made a sudden journey to London, in order to interest a number of



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Godwin then met face to face for the first time. Each was charmed with the other. To the budding poet the author of "Political Justice" seemed a nineteenth-century Socrates, a fit mortal for deification if any disruption of the existent heavenly hierarchy should occur. To the somewhat worn and disappointed philosopher his new friend seemed a possible disciple who would propagate the latter-day gospel of the Godwinian cult. During the few weeks of the Shelleys' stay in town the two friends saw much of each other. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, the only daughter of Godwin by his unfortunate wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, was at this time absent on a visit to friends in Scotland; but it is probable—as she returned to London on November 10th, and as Shelley did not leave for Wales till three days later—that she caught at least a glimpse of the man with whose future life hers was to be so closely connected. It was during this visit also that Shelley practically forgave Hogg, by voluntarily resuming the intimacy which had been checked by the latter's criminal folly at York. He called upon his late friend (who had returned to London in the pursuit of his profession), and let him see that, so far as was possible, all would be as of yore. Hogg was very glad to be really friendly with Shelley again. He undoubtedly admired and had a sincere affection for his eccentric comrade, and probably bitterly regretted the act which had demonstrated his untrustworthiness.

By the middle of November (1812) the Shelleys and

themselves again in Wales. It was with intense satisfaction that Shelley exchanged the griminess of London for the freedom and beauty of the hill-country, where the loftiest of the mountain fells were taking on their first wintry snows. But even in the delight of being once more out of the too crowded haunts of toiling London, the poet found that his sympathies were more with humanity than with nature. The latter was to be his stimulus, his delight, his love ; but the former was to be the object of his life's devotion.

“ Let me for ever be what I have been,  
But not for ever at my needy door  
Let Misery linger, speechless, pale, and lean ;  
I am the friend of the unfriended poor.”

The winter passed rapidly, for every hour was occupied. Harriet read widely, and studied Latin so perseveringly that she projected an epistle to a friend in that language. Plato, Lucretius, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, and other classical writers (mainly historians), and among the moderns Spinoza and Kant, afforded Shelley subject for continuous thought and speculation. Poetry he also wrote in a slight degree, and “Queen Mab” began to grow. But most of his time was occupied with the Tremadoc embankment labour, and in attending to the poor and distressed. The winter of 1812-13 was

With the sense of impending calamity which oppresses every reader of the record of Shelley's early married life, it is with a sensation of surprise that one discerns how happy at this time were the young poet and his girlish wife. To realize this one does not need the evidence of the remark in one of his letters to Hogg, that "when I come home to Harriet I am one of the happiest of the happy."

By the close of the winter "Queen Mab" and a number of short poetical pieces, sufficient to constitute a small volume, were in a more or less finished state of readiness for the press. But the poet had other disturbances besides the Tremadoc affair. In February Leigh Hunt was sentenced to fine and imprisonment on account of his "libel" in *The Examiner* upon the Prince-Regent, and throughout the length and breadth of the country a sound of expostulation went up—a protest not drowned by the jubilant cackle of the Conservative-geese who rejoiced at the curtailment of any liberal-minded man's freedom of speech. Naturally Shelley "boiled with indignation." Though hard pressed in money matters, and with prospective expenses anent the advent of the child for whom Harriet had already begun to prepare, he at once forwarded £20 wherewith to head a subscription for the benefit of the "martyr to liberty." Leigh Hunt also records that while in prison he received

this offer and the public subscription were, under the circumstances rightly, declined by the genial man of letters, who was happier even in arbitrary confinement than ever the too sensitive Shelley was in the course of his short life.

The stay at Tannyrallt was abruptly brought to a close by a strange incident which is alleged to have occurred towards the end of February. One wild night Shelley heard the noise made by some intruder. Springing from bed and seizing his pistols he descended to the room which had been broken into; seeing his antagonist he fired and was fired upon, and a minute later the burglar or assassin had vanished. An hour or two later Harriet and Miss Westbrook having retired to their bedrooms, leaving Shelley and his manservant, Dan Healy, downstairs on watch—a second attack was made. Shots were again interchanged, and a hand-to-hand conflict ensued. Just as the assailant was gaining the mastery, Dan (who had been sent to ascertain the hour) rushed into the room, and the murderous villain suddenly fled. Shelley's "night-gown" was pierced by a ball from his antagonist's pistol, and he declared, not only then but years later, that he had received permanent injury in the hand-to-hand conflict. That Shelley absolutely and entirely believed in the whole episode is undeniable. Harriet did so, and her letter to Hookham shortly after the event is full of circumstantial evidence. Both believed that the mysterious intruder was a would-be

scoundrel was a burglar more than ordinarily daring on account of Shelley's youth and known delicacy, and also on account of the probable ready gold of the young philanthropist, who was almost daily wont to relieve the poor, and who but a short time before had sent an indigent widow a five-pound note. But eight out of ten people then and now consider the whole affair to have been an hallucination. The evidence in support of this, however, is counterbalanced by that to the contrary. If the pistol-ball presumably fired by the assailant was found indented in the wainscot *towards* instead of *from* the direction of the window, there was the testimony of the ball-pierced night-gown. But, whether hallucination or not, the Shelleys were so much alarmed (Shelley himself was for a time entirely prostrated by the nervous shock and constant apprehension) that an immediate move far from Tannyrallt was decided upon. There is one thing which is absolutely clear to all unprejudiced persons, namely, that while the episode may have been hallucinatory, it was no figment of Shelley's. Personally I do not hesitate, after a careful examination of all the evidence for and against the Shelleyan account, to believe that, *substantially*, the story is true. There is no real evidence in favour of the assassin theory, but this has nothing to do with the fundamental truth of what is alleged to have occurred at Tannyrallt. Naturally enough the poet never disallowed the idea of attempted assassination; even in Italy, years later, he sometimes feared that his

letter to Mr. Hookham, actually occurred.

Dublin was the city of refuge chosen by the alarmed young people; thence they went to Killarney, and took a cottage on one of the lake islands, probably on either Ross or Dinas. But April found them again in London (or rather the Shelleys, for Miss Westbrook had temporarily remained in Ireland, owing to the lack of funds at the poet's command), for early in that month they were the guests of Mr. Westbrook at his house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square. Their stay here was brief, and after some experience of hotels they settled in apartments close to Piccadilly.

The spring passed into midsummer, and for Shelley the season was one of pleasantness and comparative quietude from mental excitement. Hogg's detailed account of the poet's life at this time should be read, or Professor Dowden's pages based thereon, setting forth the strange ways of the eccentric poet, and of his—(I had almost written "daily routine," but to couple "routine" with Shelley's name would be impossible)—varied experiences. In the spring he placed in the hands of Mr. Hookham, the publisher, the manuscript of his "Queen Mab," and arranged for its publication in a limited edition. Ere the end of June Harriet gave birth to a girl-babe, and Shelley, not yet of age, realized that he was not only a husband but a father. The baby was christened Ianthe, possibly after the violet-eyed lady of



strictly veracious statement, one cannot read his touching and beautiful sonnet to Ianthe without realizing his absolute sincerity. In this sonnet there is unmistakably set forth his love for wife and child :—

“ Dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom ;  
Dearest when most thy tender traits express  
The image of thy mother’s loveliness.”

In the first beauty of motherhood Harriet seemed closelier drawn to Shelley than ever. It was not long, however, before he noticed with pain and sorrow—what was evident to Hogg and others as well as to himself—that his young wife betrayed a strange and growing insensibility to her child and even to him ; that she lost her interest in those matters of the heart and mind which to him were so far above all mundane circumstances ; and that she was no longer the Harriet whom he had known and loved. Maternity seemed to have been the spell which resolved the angel into the commonplace woman. Alas, poor Harriet ! insensible you may have been, even commonplace, but if wood will mate with fire there can be but one result. To be ideally loved by a man like Shelley is to court sorrow and disaster. We are mortals, and to be loved otherwise than with human imperfection is calamitous misfortune. None of us is adapted for enthronement upon a sunlit pedestal. As Miss Hitchener, the divine Portia, “ the soul of my soul,” passed away

brother-in-law "an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror to see her caress Ianthe," and even "sometimes [made him] feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of [his] unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch"; so poor young Harriet was to pass out of the valley of enchantment into the highway of wearisome and even repellent common folk. That Harriet was in some ways to blame for the growing estrangement is unquestionable, but it is with almost unmixed pity we read of her life from this time forth. On the other hand, again, it must not be forgotten that Shelley married his wife out of chivalrous generosity, and not from love as commonly understood. Love, the overwhelming love of a man for a woman, was lying in wait for him, but the time was not yet come.

Not long after the birth of Ianthe (or, to give her her full title, Ianthe Elizabeth—for the second name had been added out of compliment to Shelley's well-loved eldest sister) her parents went to reside at Bracknell, in Berkshire. The deciding motive for this change was Shelley's desire to be near some new friends of the name of Boinville. The Boinvilles he had first met at the house of mutual friends and had been charmed by their emotional manners and their quick sympathies. Mrs. Boinville has a peculiar interest for the student of Shelley's life. In the course of time she descended, per-

circumstances permanently separated the twin. In a letter to Peacock written some years later, Shelley curiously but unconsciously affords a clue to his own nature while describing Mrs. Boinville: "It was hardly possible for a person of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of (her) understanding and affections to be quite sincere and constant." This is a saying which shows that Shelley had more knowledge of human character than he is often credited with. It probably was true of Mrs. Boinville; it certainly was true of himself.

From Bracknell the Shelleys went in the autumn to the Lakes, and thence with little delay to Edinburgh. Before this, however, Shelley, at his mother's desire, had paid a secret visit to Field Place, where once more he enjoyed his mother's and sisters' company. He had also gone to London on the attainment of his majority, and after unsuccessful negotiations with his father, had raised a few hundred pounds on the ruinous alternative of a post-obit. The winter of 1813 was spent in Edinburgh; so far as Shelley was concerned, mainly in arduous and abstruse study. Beyond the prose dissertation entitled "The Refutation of Deism" he produced little literary work. Early in 1814 he renewed his visit to Bracknell, and rejoiced in the sympathetic companionship there afforded him. From there, in March, he wrote an urgent letter to his father anent his pecuniary troubles and the necessity of resorting to ruinous means of procuring money, but without any satisfactory result. By this time Harriet was again

trouble in this direction he re-married Harriet at St. George's, Hanover Square, on the 24th of March. This re-marriage is, to us, the seal upon Shelley's early happiness.

Want of sympathy and other alienating influences had now set in clashing currents from either side. Harriet became hard and indifferent ; her husband grew more and more disappointed and disenchanted. Ianthe was but a frail bond of union ; her mother's refusal to nurse her, and Harriet's general heedlessness of her baby, still further exasperated Shelley. In April Eliza took her departure, and with her went Shelley's wife and child, while he remained in the congenial household of the Boinvilles. The well-known "Stanzas : April, 1814," were written at this time. With all their charm and significance they are yet to me more the production of a prose writer than of a poet : such a line as—

"Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude,"

would have been almost impossible to Shelley a few years later. In May the coming crisis had cast its shadow before it. The poet addressed to his wife some pathetic lines wherein he pleads against her alien attitude. It was while conscious of his ruined love and vanishing affection, and while suffering keenly from Harriet's indifference to his appeals, that Shelley met Mary Godwin. Love arose, nay love enveloped them both ere they were aware of their position ; like a fiery wind it consumed

and swept away all obstacles to their passion. Mary Godwin was then in her seventeenth year, but had the carriage and demeanour of one accustomed to womanly ways of thought and action ; she was fair to look upon rather than lovely, of an intellectual type ; of a calm and apparently passionless exterior, she had an ardent nature, and was, in a word, just such a child of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft as the theorist might have prophesied. By training, by temperament, by imagination—in all things, she was fitted to mate with such an one as Shelley. She could be to him all that Harriet had been, and infinitely more : as he could be to her an ideal, a friend, and a husband—a triune creature beyond the conception of the girl-wife who had voluntarily left him, though without thought of definite separation.

That there were barriers to an absolutely sympathetic union between even such kindred spirits as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Godwin was inevitable. Shelley had no compeer upon this earth. No fellow mortal could have satisfied the whole desire of his heart. Perhaps this almost fantastic yearning for the unattainable—this desire of the moth for the star—is the heritage of many of us. It is a longing which shall be insatiate even in death : but of necessity there can be few of us who, in the words of Mérimée, so passion for this passion as did Shelley. Like the strange phantoms in *Vathek* he was for ever conscious of a fiery heart agonizing in unquench-

emotion which this new love—or rather this first advent of love—excited in Shelley we have the unbiassed and unexaggerated record of Peacock, who at this period was closely intimate with the poet.

“Nothing that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind ‘suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection.’ His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered.”

But though love had come upon Shelley so overwhelmingly, he did not surrender without a fierce struggle. It was the constraint he put upon his emotions that produced the spiritual turmoil in which he suffered by day and by night. It was almost accidentally—though inevitably—that heart learned the secret of heart: that friendship stood forth revealed as love. The stanzas addressed to “Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin: June, 1814” are the poetic record of this period of passionate uncer-

The fourth and fifth stanzas are at once the best and the most interesting.

“ Upon my heart thy accents sweet  
Of peace and pity fell like dew  
On flowers half dead ; thy lips did meet  
Mine tremblingly ; thy dark eyes threw  
Their soft persuasion on my brain,  
Charming away its dream of pain.

We are not happy, sweet ! our state  
Is strange, and full of doubt and fear ;  
More need of words that ills abate ;—  
Reserve or censure come not near  
Our sacred friendship lest there be  
No solace left for thee or me.”

From a pathetic letter written by Harriet from Bath early in July it is manifest that she had no idea of the permanency of the separation. Four days' silence had been sufficient to break down her reserve. Not having heard from Shelley for this brief period, she feared that some misfortune had waylaid him, and therefore she wrote a letter of anxious inquiry to Hookham the bookseller, as one certain to be acquainted with Shelley's whereabouts. But by this time the latter had become convinced (on evidence very dubious even when most presentable) that his wife had been unfaithful to him : that, in a word, Harriet's as yet unborn child would not be of his parentage. Later he came to believe absolutely that in this point, at any rate, he had wronged Harriet, and that Charles Bysshe was veritably his son. With

and a woman was one dissoluble at will, on proven incompatibility of mind and tastes: and still more imperative seemed disunion when married lealty no longer existed. From what we know of Shelley it is certain that had he believed in Harriet's love and constancy he would, at whatever cost, have refrained from the course which in fact he pursued. Harriet does seem to have given *him* (I have emphasized the pronoun, for none other believed for a moment in her disloyalty) some cause for suspicion. But while one can at most only surmise, it seems indubitable that she was guiltless of any wrong to her husband.

When Shelley realized that in no case could he again regard Harriet as his wife—by which he meant something more than a mate—and that Mary Godwin had won his love, he determined to explain his position fully to the unfortunate girl who had borne him his well-loved Ianthe and was in due time to give birth to his second child. He would offer her his friendship, and even urge her to live with him and Mary. Incredible as it may seem, he saw nothing incongruous in this extraordinary proffer.

But before it was made, and while the curious complication of Shelley's relationships was weaving its web of good and evil, the husband and wife had an interview in London at the former's request. It is not known what was agreed upon or disputed at this meeting, though it is highly probable that Shelley definitely as-



surrender the idea of her husband's loyalty. She looked upon his desertion of her with a philosophical tolerance which does her credit. It was but an attack of passion, a curable mania. Months, even a year or so might pass, and then this new divinity would fall from her high estate even as had succumbed the "Brown Demon," once "the soul of his soul." She bitterly resented, she gave no shadow of condonation to the part played by Mary, but she believed in the impermanency of the new connection. She was, fortunately or unfortunately, incapable of real passion, and so could not calculate possible results. As for Mary Godwin, she shared her father's and her lover's views on the marriage contract; and, what is more to the point when we come to consider *her* responsibility, she fully believed that there was no barrier to her union with Shelley, insomuch that Harriet (as she had every reason to believe) had been unfaithful.

NOTE.—It will be as well to give here, as succinctly as practicable, the record of Harriet Shelley's after-life. She continued to correspond with her husband after his departure with Mary Godwin, and, as already stated, hoped against hope that he would tire of his passion and return to her. Shelley had made for her the best monetary settlement within his power, so she was not dependent upon her father or any one else. (Early in 1815 she was in receipt of an income of £400, one half of which was paid by Shelley, the other by her father.) She returned to Bath, and there awaited her confinement. Naturally, she declined to accept her husband's proposal that she should join him and Mary in Switzerland: for one thing she relied on a change of his sentiments when her child should be born. The latter event occurred on the last day of November.

A fortnight later than the interview just referred to Shelley and Mary Godwin departed for the Continent.

for most of our knowledge of Shelley's life at this time. He saw Harriet on several occasions, and she became more and more convinced of the insuperableness of the breach between them. Unfortunately the portion of the diary from mid-May until the ensuing July (1816) is non-existent—so that in Mary Godwin's journals there is no further reference to Harriet Shelley until the day when a letter from Hookham brought tragic news. Shelley was pleased with his little boy, but the child brought no reconciliation between husband and wife. Charles Bysshe, it may be added, died in boyhood—some four years after the Spezzian sea had calmed for ever the passionate unrest of his father's life. When at last Harriet realized the finality of her disunion with Shelley, she gave way to bitterness of heart. If her love had been strenuous she would have yielded to despair; that this was not so is to be inferred from the fact that disappointed, resentful, eager for pleasure to alleviate her pain, she formed a new connection. This resulted unfortunately, and then poor Harriet foresaw nothing worth living for. From her schooldays onward (as the reader will remember) she had always maintained not only the inviolable right of every human being to end at will his or her life, but had also again and again, at long intervals and before various witnesses, reiterated her intention to put her theory in practice the moment the burden of life should become insupportable, or even oppressive. In no fit of despair, but intolerant of her misery, she left her lodging near her father's house one day early in November, over two years after Shelley's departure with Mary Godwin, and found surcease of all pain in the waters of the Serpentine.

It has been my aim as far as practicable to narrate the incidents of Shelley's life impartially, and to do so it was necessary to avoid the language either of unqualified approval or of condemnation. I therefore leave readers to form their own conclusions on the painful incidents of Shelley's separation from his wife, her subsequent

monumental work of Professor Dowden. They must go to the original records, to the correspondence of many persons writing from different standpoints, and must take into consideration many circumstances necessarily omitted from this memoir. Without making any dogmatic statement, I wish simply—as one who has thoroughly studied the question in all its bearings, and who is familiar with all that can be adduced for and against the persons concerned—to assert my belief that Shelley was guiltless of wrong intent, that he believed he was acting not only consistently, but wisely and even justly, and that his sorrow and life-long regret for the unfortunate outcome of his action were genuine. Harriet was unhappy, and, in accordance with her principles, she acted aright in putting an end to her life. We may condemn the act, but it is absurd to speak of suicide as a cowardly or evil resort when it is due to honest conviction of its desirability and even rectitude. Shelley experienced bitter grief when he heard of the death of the woman whom he had married, and who had borne him two children, and it is doubtful if his philosophy brought him real comfort—the philosophy that told him he could in nowise be held responsible for what had occurred. It is with deep regret those who revere Shelley have to condemn him for his unjust suspicions of his wife's disloyalty, suspicions which he afterwards admitted were baseless. It is a sad story, howsoever regarded : perhaps the easiest way of escape from difficult judgment is to admit that Harriet, an unsuitable wife for a man like Shelley, was latterly foolish and unsympathetic—that Shelley, intoxicated with the vision of the ideal life, behaved unwisely, and even wrongfully, in his conduct of certain realities.

## CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Shelley and Mary Godwin left London on the morning of the 28th of July (1814), they were accompanied by the latter's half-sister, or half-sister by courtesy. Miss Clara Mary Jane Clairmont—by her relatives called Jane, but to the Shelleys and their friends known as Clare or Claire—was the daughter, by a former marriage, of Godwin's second wife. She was like Mary Godwin in certain of her tastes, but intellectually she was her inferior. Mary was fair and suave, Claire was dark and extremely vivacious. Both were at this time young girls, and were affectionate companions if not friends. They had an elder half-sister, Fanny Imlay, the daughter of Godwin's first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, who had lived in unlegalized marriage with a Mr. Imlay. Miss Imlay was of a less ardent and more timid disposition than either of her half-sisters, and would probably, had she been at home in this eventful July, have dissuaded Mary from elopement with Shelley.

that his means were very limited, and would speedily be more so, as Mr. Westbrook would at once cease the annual allowance he made to his daughter Harriet and her husband, a course, moreover, which Mr. Timothy Shelley might also adopt; and (3) that Godwin's daughter was considerably under age.

There are all the elements of a tragi-comedy in this episode. Not very many months previously Shelley had written to Godwin a letter of boyish enthusiasm, more ambitious, apparently, of the master's reception of him as a worshipping disciple than of any other honour or glory the world could bestow. And now he elopes with the philosopher's young daughter, and, moreover, includes another of his mentor's children in the party. Yet, all the time, Shelley never seems to have realized that Godwin had any just cause of complaint against him. As a matter of fact, the blow was not one entirely without compensation. The author of the "Political Justice" was familiar with the unpleasantnesses of poverty, and there was balm to his wounded spirit in the knowledge that, for the time being at any rate, he would not need to provide for either Mary or Claire. And he foresaw, what actually occurred, ultimate valuable monetary assistance from Shelley.

There is some uncertainty as to whether or not Miss Clairmont left Godwin's house with Mary with knowledge of what was about to take place. Her own account (but she was by no means always a reliable authority concerning

indulge in an exceptionally early walk ; and that when they encountered Shelley at the corner of Hatton Garden he begged her to accompany him and Mary to France, as she was a good French linguist, and they were unfamiliar with the language. However, it is a matter of little importance.

The three journeyed to Paris, and thence with little delay to Switzerland, by way of the Jura. It had been their intention to perform the journey across France on foot, and to this end they had hired a donkey for the conveyance of their luggage. Mainly, however, on account of Mary's indifferent health, a mule-drawn vehicle was engaged, which carried them across plain and hill till they passed the Jura, beheld the heights beyond Neufchatel, and finally reached Brunnen on the lake of Lucerne. Here Shelley began the last (unless we consider the fragment styled "The Coliseum,"<sup>f</sup> composed in 1819), and what promised to be much the best, of his prose tales—the romance entitled "The Assassins." There is nothing of the "Zastrozzi" style about this well-written though occasionally somewhat stilted narrative. The finest portion of it describes the beautiful valley of Bethzatanai.

Want of money caused an abrupt return to be necessary, and the homeward journey was made by way of the Reuss and the Rhine. This trip was greatly enjoyed by Shelley, and gave him the main part of the material wherefrom he extracted the glorious lines of "Alastor." It came to a close at Gravesend on the 13th of September,

cluding visits to Harriet, occupied the autumnal and early winter months. Early in January of 1815, Shelley's prospects very materially improved, owing to the death of his grandfather, Sir Bysshe. By an arrangement with his father, now Sir Timothy, he found himself in the possession of a yearly income of £1,000. Of this allowance a fifth part went to the sustenance of Harriet and the children, and no inconsiderable portion of the remainder was charitably and generously expended.

The months went past very happily so far as Shelley and Mary were concerned. More and more each realized that they had not been blinded by passion, but that each was genuinely suited to the other. Many hours weekly were spent by Shelley in assisting the necessitous, and it is said (though on extremely dubious authority), that he even walked a hospital, in order that he might acquire sufficient medical knowledge to be of real service to the poor whom it was his wont to visit. Perhaps these experiences insensibly increased his morbid fears concerning his own health; at any rate, at this period he became convinced that he had but a short time to live. Undoubtedly he was fragile in body and frail in constitution, but neither then nor later does he seem to have suffered from any organic complaint, although, in the spring of 1815, a transient abscess (the origin of much pain and alarm) had formed upon one of his lungs. Probably it was an abscess that attacked him in the

dwelt in the shadow of early death ; a fact which must be borne in mind when we come to consider his poetic development, powers, and achievement.

On or about the 20th of February, Mary gave birth to a seven-months' girl-babe, a delicate infant, but for whom the father and mother hoped all things. Some ten or twelve days elapsed, and Mary awoke to find her little one dead. The grief experienced by both parents was poignant. There is a touching pathos in the entries of Mary's diary about this time—

*"Sunday, March 19th.*—I dream that my little baby came to life again ; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day.

*"Monday, March 20th.*—Dream again about my baby."

In mid-May, Claire Clairmont left her friends for a time, greatly to Mary's relief, who had tired of her constant companionship and her somewhat capricious temper. Soon after this Shelley found London again becoming intolerable, for was not "summer y-comin in" ? Therefore he hasted away to seek refuge in Devon. A little later, however, he and Mary found a suitable cot-



that "Alastor" was written, the poem wherein Shelley first rises into the realm of absolute poetry. Sometimes Peacock, then a resident at Marlow, would walk over and join the young people for a short time; and late in August a delightful water excursion was made, in which both Peacock and Charles Clairmont were of the party. Those were happy days indeed for Shelley, as the friends sailed or oared their way up the lovely river reaches, till at last, in the golden September glow, the spires of Oxford rose above the riverine alders and willows. At the ancient city they disembarked, and Shelley showed Mary his former haunts, and the rooms he and Hogg had occupied when the fiat of expulsion had gone forth against them. Thereafter they proceeded up-stream to a mile or two beyond Lechlade, fourteen miles from the source of the Thamés, but finding the stream too shallow they had perforce to return. Windsor was reached again in four days, and all felt better in mind and body for the happy experience. Shelley, as Clairmont wrote to his sister Claire, had even obtained "the ruddy, healthy complexion of the autumn," and had become "twice as fat as he used to be." With pleasant companionship, freedom from trouble, joy in the beauty of earth, river, and sky (and, as Peacock records, wholesomely fed), Shelley found it easy to believe that health was no impossible dream for him. But in the midst of this transient happiness he was keenly alive to hints of melancholy and sadness. While night descended upon

has inspired at least two great poets since Shelley's time, one of whom was but recently in our midst; but none has written lovelier stanzas than those composed by the youth of twenty-three.

A SUMMER-EVENING CHURCHYARD, LECHLADE,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere  
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;  
And pallid evening twines its beaming hair  
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of day;  
Silence and twilight, unbeloved of men,  
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,  
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;  
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,  
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.  
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass  
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, ærial Pile! whose pinnacles  
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,  
Obey'st in silence their sweet solemn spells,  
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,  
Around whose lessening and invisible height  
Gather among the stars the clouds of night,

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres,

And terrorless as this serene night :

Here could I hope, like some inquiring child

Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight

Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep

That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

The Windsor woods were in all the glory of early autumn when the travellers returned. Amid the lovely foliage and in the serene air Shelley's genius expanded like a flower. A new mastery had come to him; the faculty of expression was no longer painfully inferior to the conception. That lovely poem "Alastor," the more fascinating because of its autobiographical significance, grew as the autumn waned; and ere the last gold of the lime and elm had been mingled with the fallen amber and crimson of the oak and beech, it had reached its majestic close.

Before referring with brief detail to "Alastor," I must return to Shelley's early poem, "Queen Mab." Corrected and recast in 1812, this precocious production saw the light early in 1813. In 1821, a London bookseller named Clark issued a pirated edition, greatly to the annoyance and anger of the poet, who was then abroad. "Queen Mab" and its heterodox Notes have been frequently republished in this country and in America, and have undoubtedly had a wider circulation than any other of Shelley's writings. It is asserted that the poem, with its voluminous notes, has had a very considerable influence upon the working classes in the direction of free-thought.

thousands who would never think of reading the "Prometheus" or the "Cenci," or who would not care for either if they did. The chief Notes are (1) "On Wealth;" (2) "On Marriage;" (3) "On Necessity;" (4) "On Deism;" (5) "On Christianity;" and (6) "On Flesh Eating"—an argument in favour of vegetarianism, republished in 1813 as a separate pamphlet, under the title "A Vindication of Natural Diet." The metre of "Queen Mab" is the unrhymed lyrical iambic.

How wonderful is Death,  
Death and his brother Sleep !  
One, pale as yonder waning moon  
With lips of lurid blue ;  
The other, rosy as the morn  
When throned on ocean's wave  
It blushes o'er the world :  
Yet both so passing wonderful !

\* \* \* \* \*

The Fairy's frame was slight, yon fibrous cloud,  
That catches but the palest tinge of even,  
And which the straining eye can hardly seize  
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,  
Were scarce so thin, so slight ; but the fair star  
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,  
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,  
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,  
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,  
Yet with an undulating motion,

Her thin and misty form  
Moved with the moving air,  
And the clear silver tones,  
As thus she spoke, were such  
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

"Queen Mab" is the Fairy Queen, whose knowledge of things, past, present, and to come is all-embracing. The mortal whom she visits is Ianthe; the latter's soul is withdrawn from her body, and ascends in Mab's magic car. They reach the Temple of Nature, and mentally survey the ancient empires of Syria, Egypt, Judæa, Greece, Rome, and Carthage. Ianthe is taught what lessons of humility and hope to draw therefrom, and is then instructed upon the evils of the Present; the crime of kingship, the atrocity of war, the tyranny of priests and rulers, the primal evil of religion; then comes the praise of necessity, the true religion, faith in which is incompatible with a belief in a personal God or future punishment; and finally the future is foretold. The magic car redescends, Ianthe's spirit re-enters her body, and she wakes to find her lover by her side. The aim of the poem is to attack dogmatic religion and the social state, and, of course, much depends on a reader's own views whether or not he sympathizes with its revolutionary bias. Some uncritical admirers would have it that it is one of the greatest poems ever written, but assuredly such enthusiasts are misled by the glamour of

tingly a noteworthy production, howsoever regarded.

Shelley's genius in "Queen Mab" is like a subterranean fountain, which occasionally projects a stream of brilliant spray: in "Alastor" this stream rises steadily and in splendid volume. All that had impressed the young poet in Wales, the Lake country, Killarney, Devon, Switzerland, on the Rhine, and on the Thames, was given forth again in concentrated form. The name of the poem was suggested by Peacock. It is a Greek term signifying an avenging spirit. Alastor is, as Mr. Symonds has well put it, the Nemesis of solitary souls. The narrative relates how the poet leaves his home, and wanders far abroad through the empires of the East, even unto Cashmere, where he has a vision of a veiled maid, a vision which causes the fire of deathless yearning to arise in his heart. At length, in pursuit of this phantasmal beatitude, he reaches "the lone Chorasmian shore;" here he embarks in a little shallop, and is whirled by the current past the precipitous heights of the Caucasus, through a wild and terrible mountain cavern, and is at last stranded close by the verge of a great fall of water. The poet then roams through a primeval forest in a remote corner of which he finds death. The allegory is easy of perception, and at any rate need not be enlarged upon here, as in every edition where "Alastor" appears there is Shelley's own explanatory preface. It will be sufficient to say that "the veiled maid" is the ideal love unattainable in mortal guise. This passionate

beautiful "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," in "Epipsy-  
chidion," and in many of the short poems. In "Alastor"  
the poet was enraptured with the dream of encountering  
ideal loveliness incarnate; in the "Hymn to Intellectual  
Beauty," written a year later, he realizes that this ideal  
must ever win his passionate devotion, but that never  
in mortal image would he find the likeness of what is  
eternal. All that Shelley had hitherto written had been  
defaced by many artistic flaws; but in "Alastor" he  
passes from apprenticeship to masterhood. His blank  
verse is at once beautiful and majestic; and even where  
it challenges comparison with that of Milton or with that  
of Wordsworth, it has a lyrical, an overwelling music of  
its own which few poets have equalled. No poet has  
excelled Milton in felicitous use of sonorous names, but  
even in Milton it would be difficult to select many pas-  
sages to surpass the following—

"The awful ruins of the days of old :  
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste  
Where stood Jerusalem, and the fallen towers  
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,  
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange  
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,  
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,  
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills  
Conceals."

What sound and majesty in the lines describing the

“Earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood”—which opens  
“Alastor” !—

“Enough from incommunicable dream,  
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,  
Hias shone within me, that serenely now  
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre  
Suspended in the solitary dome  
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,  
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain  
May modulate with murmurs of the air,  
And motions of the forests and the sea,  
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns  
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.”

What solemn closing music in those lines which forbid  
mourning for him who is at last made one with Nature—

“Art and eloquence,  
And all the shows o’ the world are frail and vain  
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.  
It is a woe ‘too deep for tears,’ when all  
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,  
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves  
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,  
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;  
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,  
Nature’s vast frame, the web of human things,  
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.”



in that lovely Roman cemetery where lie the remains of two of England's greatest poets. In March "Alastor; and other Poems" was published. Little notice was taken of the book, though it was so unmistakably the production of a poet as noteworthy as any then living. Many unpleasantnesses, including the exceedingly undignified and ungenerous conduct of William Godwin, who, to use a vulgarism, stole from Shelley's pockets while he hit him over the head—caused the poet to make up his mind to go to Switzerland again. The immediacy of this trip was urged by Claire Clairmont, who had again joined the Shelley household. She had another aim in view than the wish to see Geneva. In London she had become acquainted with Lord Byron, the most brilliant and romantic man of his time, as well as the most celebrated poet. She had called upon him to solicit his interest in obtaining a post for her in a certain theatre, but from the first moment she saw him she fell in love with him. Byron was conscious of her infatuation, and took advantage of it. Claire knew of his intention to go to Geneva, and aware of the fact that he had no intention of burdening himself with her company, she urged Shelley to make that Swiss town his goal, in order that she might meet her lover. The Shelleys did not even know that she was acquainted with the name, much less the person, of "Childe Harold." The lake of Geneva, surrounded by verdant hills and

in the warm noon-day to lie in the bottom of the *chaloupe*, to hearken to the lap-lap of the rippling water alongside, and to watch the pageant of the clouds overhead ; in the twilight or starlit evenings to glide towards the flower-fragrant shore, above which rose the yellow moon, then nearly at the full—here were prospects of infinite charm ! About the same time, Byron arrived at the hotel where they had taken up their quarters, and an intimacy soon arose between the poets. Ere long they left the hotel. Byron and his travelling physician and friend, Polidori, occupied the Villa Diodati (where Milton had visited a friend on his homeward way from Italy), and Shelley, Mary, and Claire the Villa Mont Alégre. The two poets became joint owners of a boat, and many were the excursions which were made, including one round a great part of the lake, to Chillon and Lausanne. Whether or not the intrigue between Byron and Miss Clairmont was a thing of the past ere the former and the Shelleys met at Geneva is uncertain ; but it was not until the knowledge could no longer be kept from them that Claire Clairmont confessed to her friends that in her reckless passion she had given herself to Byron. In the friendly intimacy which came to exist between the two poets, the literary admiration was on the part of Shelley, the personal admiration on the part of Byron. The latter found himself refined and inspired by his spiritually-minded companion. The younger poet was fascinated by the splendid genius of the elder, but he

recognized the fact that Byron made misinterpret out much worse than he in reality was ; that his evil nature was superficial ; and that he had as splendid capacities for good as for poetical creation. "Count Maddalo" and many of Shelley's letters show how just and discriminating was his estimate of his brilliant friend—or rather acquaintance ; for Shelley could not love a man who, in the deeper questions of life, seemed to him to fall so far short of a manly attitude. That, on the other hand, Byron recognized the fineness of Shelley's nature is clear, from his emphatic statement, made after the latter's death : "He was the most gentle, the most amiable, and least worldly-minded person I ever met ; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a *beau idéal* of all that is fine, high-minded and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter."

The "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" was at least conceived during the lake voyage just referred to, though at this time very little poetry was actually written by Shelley. Like many ardent worshippers of nature, he often found himself mute in her presence. He wrote in the afterglow of memory, not in the full light of the moment's enjoyment. The beautiful lines to Mont Blanc were an outcome of his emotions as he lingered on the Bridge of Arve on his way through the Valley of Chamouni, whither he had gone with Mary to inhale the serene air of the greatest of the Swiss mountains. On their return to

ing chats resolved themselves into ghostly discussions.<sup>1</sup> At least one famous book was the outcome thereof. On Byron's suggestion each member of the party undertook to write something weird or ghastly. Shelley began a semi-autobiographical story which came to nought. Byron commenced a tale called "The Vampire," which he fully mentally cartooned, but of which he only wrote a fragmentary portion. Polidori indulged in an absurd narrative more fantastic than impressive. Mary Shelley disappointed the others by her non-production of any story; but, as it turned out, she was only waiting for an adequate motive. One evening she heard Byron and Shelley discussing the nature of the principle of life, and the possibility of communicating the vital spark to inanimate matter. That night, as she lay sleepless, she had a waking vision of a student of mysteries creating a human monster, and of his terrible emotions when his task resulted in unexpected success. Here was a theme indeed. The result was the extraordinary romance, "Frankenstein," a book which has made a permanent mark in the literature of the West.

In the early autumn Shelley and Mary returned to England by way of Fontainebleau, Versailles, and Havre. Mid-September found them Peacock's guests at Marlow, whence they went for a short time to Bath and, at intervals, elsewhere. Early in 1817 they settled in a

cottage-house at West Malvern, on the Thames side. But, ere this, tragic and important incidents had occurred.

The year 1816 had been and was to prove a memorable one to Shelley. Early therein his negotiations with Sir Timothy had collapsed; "Alastor" had been published; the visit to Switzerland had been made, and a friendship with Byron been formed. The late autumn was to bring forth much unhappiness. Godwin was hard pressed by poverty, and Shelley was forced to disappoint him monetarily owing to the impracticability of raising further funds. In the midst of the anxiety and worry caused by pecuniary troubles, alarming news came concerning Godwin's adopted daughter. Gentle, affectionate, unhappy Fanny—the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft by Mr. Imlay—had long been subject to dire dejection. One day she left home, and having reached Swansea, whether *en route* or as a goal we know not, she put an end to her life by poison, and was found dead in her hotel. Shelley, who on behalf of Godwin had hastened to Bristol in pursuit of the unhappy fugitive, felt the blow so keenly that his nervous system almost gave way. He made all speed home from the west to break the sad news to Mary. The calamity aged Godwin, upon whom the burden of years had begun to press heavily. While Shelley yet sorrowed for and brooded over the death of the unfortunate girl, whom he had always regarded with affectionate brotherly sympathy and true friendliness, he received another painful shock. He and Mary had left Peacock's cottage: Mary had gone to Bath and he had

him some kindly words in a magazine. On the first day of his visit he received a letter from Hookham, of whom he had made inquiries concerning his separated wife Harriet. This letter conveyed the tragic news that "Harriet Smith" had drowned herself in the Serpentine. Leigh Hunt's companionship and sympathy did more than anything else to sustain the poet under this sudden affliction; this, and his own conviction that Harriet herself would have been the last to hold him responsible for the tragedy. He had now two duties to perform without delay; to take his children by Harriet, Ianthe and Charles, under his protection, and to fulfil his contract of marriage to Mary Godwin. All this meant extra expenditure, and, moreover, Shelley was soon to find Claire Clairmont and the child or her intrigue with Byron practically dependent upon him. On the 30th of December in this eventful year a nominal reconciliation took place between Godwin and Shelley, and on the same day the latter and Mary became legally wedded at St. Mildred's Church in London.

## CHAPTER V.

TO Shelley's reiterated demands for the custody of his children, their maternal grandfather, Mr. Westbrook, turned a deaf ear. This gentleman desired to deprive Shelley of his rights as a father, and he accordingly instituted a chancery suit. He laid the utmost stress on Shelley's separation from Harriet, the illegal union with Mary Godwin, the poet's atheistical and republican publications, especially "Queen Mab," and his avowed heterodox opinions. Shelley's defence was dignified, truthful, and to the point. But, as was to be expected, Lord Eldon as Lord Chancellor decided against Shelley, and on the main question judgment was given on the 27th of March (1817). The final settlement was not made till the midsummer of the following year, by which time Shelley had left England never to return. The children were placed under the care of a Dr. Hume, to be educated in principles which their father considered mistaken and harmful.

be just and reasonable. To us who know Shelley, Lord Eldon's judgment seems harsh; but if we consider the case purely on its own basis we shall find that, according to the then prevalent views of morality and the right of public interference with private opinion, the decree was reasonable if not strictly justifiable. Shelley suffered much from this adverse decision. He felt not only wounded, but outraged; and his resentment was only tempered by that lofty spirit which more and more possessed him and strengthened him for noble work yet to be done, and for, mayhap, nobler work never to be accomplished in his short life.

The poet needed all the rest and soothing quietude obtainable at Marlow to enable him to bear up against his recent sorrows—the suicide of Fanny (Imlay) Godwin, the even more tragic death of Harriet, and the deprivation of his paternal rights. He even feared his own imprisonment on account of his avowed opinions. To add to his trouble, Claire Clairmont in January gave birth to her and Byron's illegitimate child. To the little girl the name of Alba (the Dawn) was at first given, but afterwards this was changed to Allegra.

While awaiting the slow decision of the law, Shelley's anxious season of probation was lightened by the sympathy and kindness of friends, especially Leigh Hunt. At the latter's cottage in Hampstead, one February evening in 1817, there was a gathering of poets. The genial host was a cultivated company in himself;



verse, and undergone strange vicissitudes, the P. B. Shelley, who was by some considered an authentic emissary of Satan, by others a vapouring lunatic, and by a few a man of genius ; there was a Mr. Reynolds, now well known by name to all students of English poetry ; and there was a youth with vivid eyes and mobile mouth, called John Keats. Shelley liked Keats from the outset, but the younger did not at first take to the older. Keats was above all things the poet—not, like Shelley, the poet *plus* the seer, *plus* the philanthropist, *plus* the reformer. It was enough for him to live and feel, and the whisper of green leaves in the woodlands was infinitely more worthy of audience than the oratory of all the agitators in the kingdom. He was but a boy in years, moreover, and the joy of the world was too keen in him to allow him to share Shelley's raptures and agonies. It is clear, also—though this is not to his credit—that his attitude towards Shelley was suspicious, if not actually resentful, on account of the latter's superior birth and social status. He was, of course, speedily set at rest on this point, and the twain would doubtless have passed from mutual respect and admiration to assured friendship had it not been that Death, who was drawing near for both, had already projected his shadow toward the younger. In the ensuing months the two poets saw each other at intervals, but circumstances prevented their becoming really intimate. For Shelley's friendships and life at this time, the student cannot do better than

Shelley had now in very truth entered the sphere of poetic creation. The wings which had already borne him so nobly in "Alastor" proved able for as lofty and more prolonged flight. At all times the poet was wont to compose in the open air, by river, sea, mountain, or amid the vernal and autumnal woodlands. His last great poem was written in his boat upon the Bay of Spezzia; the Pisan pine-woods, the heights of the Euganean hills, the Venetian lagoons, beheld the birth of some of his most famous lyrics; fronting the sea at Livorno was the Villa Valsovano, on the windy roof of which most of "The Cenci" was written; and the greater part of "Prometheus" was composed amid the gigantic ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, less desolate then in their lonely grandeur than now in their tourist-haunted "picturesqueness." And amid scenes as lonely, if not so immediately impressive, Shelley's second great poem was written. "Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City"—usually known as "The Revolt of Islam"—is in splendour of poetry not inferior to "Alastor," though its length, remote allusions, digressions, and the intense, rarefied atmosphere of the whole, stand in the way of its being a popular poem. It is said that early in the year of its composition Shelley and Keats each agreed to write a long work in verse, and that the results of this undertaking were "Laon and Cythna" and "Endymion." However this may be, there is no doubt that both these

hasten, inaugurate the new reign of peace on earth and good-will to men. Stanza by stanza it grew, as day by day the poet lay in his boat while it floated on the slow stream under the beech-groves of Bisham, or as he wandered among the ferny glades and shadow-chequered alleys of the adjacent woodlands. Written in the Spenserian stanza, "Laon and Cythna" has a keener, wider, more lyrical music than the linked and long drawn sweetness of the verse of "The Faerie Queen." In it the poet speaks out of the suffering and experience of his life, and gives utterance to all the desire of his heart. His hatred of priestly and kingly oppression and intolerance, his passionate faith in humanity and its proud destiny, his principle of the equality of women with men, his doctrine of unfettered love, his aspirations towards a bloodless revolution which would bring about a confederation of all the nations of the world, his hopes for a golden age which would as immeasurably outvie that chronicled through centuries of song as the era in which he lived transcended the barbarous savagery of feudal days—all that experience had taught him, intellect assured him, faith promised him, was enshrined, was—in Mr. Symonds' words—"blent together and concentrated in the glowing cantos of this wonderful romance." The poet's own prefatory remarks should be read, wherein will be found the re-assertion of that principle which underlay all Shelley ever wrote, the principle that

the human spirit, as well as of the struggle of peoples for freedom. Laon is a young poet-prophet, whose words rouse a struggling nation (*Islam*, by which Shelley meant the nations of the Levant under Turkish rule) to a defiance of and a temporary victory over despotism. Cythna is the ideal woman—lover, help-mate, friend. As a further challenge to conventionality, Shelley made the lovers, Cythna and Laon, brother and sister; but, finding that he thereby hurt the cause he had at heart, and served no good end, he finally excised or altered certain lines and passages. The good cause is ere long overwhelmed, and both the lovers are martyred for the sake of liberty. As they awake from the darkness of death they are greeted by a lovely child-spirit, Cythna's daughter, who guides them in her pearly boat down a great river which flows towards the Temple of the Spirit where sits the "mighty Senate" of the dead. The beautiful first canto is familiar to many who have never found their way through the poem to the twelfth. From "the peak of an ærial promontory," around whose caverned base the vexed surge of ocean for ever breaks, the poet sees "a golden dawn" illumine the world, and speedily (in verse quivering with poetic emotion) he describes a skiey conflict between an eagle and a serpent—emblems of tyranny and free-thought—and how the wounded and nigh-slain serpent succumbs and falls into the waters, but at last finds refuge with a woman "beautiful as morning" (the spirit of nature and love).

boat, and as they sail speaks to him of the eternal struggle between good and evil—that having been a typical conflict which they had just witnessed. In due time they reach the Temple of the Spirit, whereat have just arrived two spirits, Laon and Cythna—by whom henceforth, the story is told. There is nothing of the kind in our literature to compare with the magnificent conflict of the eagle and the serpent—a struggle so terrible that from the passionate encounter “a vapour like the sea’s suspended spray” is gathered, while far away in the void air the shattered plumes and riven scales float or flash. Anon the snake will triumph and rear, radiant with victory, his “red and burning crest;” then again the eagle will exert “the strength of his unconquerable wings,” and soar from the whirling sea-surge as swiftly as smoke that is suddenly belched forth from a volcano. In “Laon and Cythna” Shelley has owed nothing directly to any poetic predecessor. Its shortcomings—and they are many when looked for critically—are no less his own than its merits. Occasionally he reiterates an echo of his own music, as in that stanza so suggestive of certain lines in “Alastor,” the thirty-third of the twelfth canto.

“Till down that mighty stream, dark, calm, and fleet,  
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven,  
Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet

Revolt of Islam"—the name by which to the great majority of people it is known. The original was finished late in September, about three weeks after the birth of his and Mary's second child.

It is uncertain whether or not "Rosalind and Helen" was begun before or after "Laon and Cythna," though it was not finished until the summer of the following year at the Bagni di Lucca, in Northern Italy. Here, as in "Alastor," "The Revolt of Islam," "Prince Athanase," "Epipsychidion," the dominant theme is Love; but the treatment is less ideal and less epic than in the second of the great poems named. In his choice of metre (mainly the iambic tetrameter) Shelley was plainly influenced by Scott and Byron, and probably also by Coleridge. If there is little that is directly autobiographical in this poem, there is much we can discern to be due to circumstances and experiences within Shelley's ken. In Lionel there is something of himself; Helen and Rosalind have each their shadowy prototypes. Helen and Rosalind have been alienated on account of the latter's connection with Lionel, but at last have become reconciled, and, meeting by the Lake of Como, narrate to each other their diverse experiences. Helen speaks of her lover, describes his imprisonment, release, and death, and tells how their son has inherited his father's qualities, and may one day nobly carry on the work of the redemption

of the world to which Lionel had devoted himself. Rosalind, on the other hand, had been perforce married to a tyrannical husband. Her life was wretched, but even after her husband's death she had not the comfort of her children; for by his will she was deprived of her little ones. Finally Rosalind and Helen agree to live together; the former regains her daughter, who in due time becomes betrothed to Helen's son. The motive of the poem is probably due to Mary Shelley's interrupted friendship with a well-loved school-friend named Isabel Baxter, who, on her marriage to a Mr. Booth, was commanded by her husband to cease all communication with the Shelleys. The episode of the children severed by law from their mother's care; the good wrought by the unlegalized union of Helen and Lionel; the evil and misery of the "consecrated" thralldom which bound Rosalind and her husband—these are easily traceable to real experiences on the part or within the knowledge of the author. As a poem, "Rosalind and Helen" is the least successful of Shelley's longer productions. It has some fine lines, but if it were not for its personal interest it would be little read, and if it had been the sole work of its author it would not be read at all. A much more powerful, interesting, and beautiful production is the unfinished poem entitled "Prince Athanase," which, although not published until the issue of the "Posthumous Poems" in 1840, was written at Marlow about the year 1811.

mortal—Pandemos, the earthly Venus. The poem is more akin to "Alastor" than any other; but where in the latter the poet-hero dies ere he can fall to any earthly worship, in the former the hero is betrayed by Pandemos. Shelley left it a fragment, for he came to the conclusion that the psychological analysis was over-refined and even morbid, though he valued the poem too highly to discard it as a non-publishable piece. He himself is Prince Athanase, even as he is the Poet in "Alastor," Laon in "The Revolt of Islam," and Lionel in "Rosalind and Helen." Like his latest great poem, "The Triumph of Life," "Prince Athanase" is written in *terza rima*, a difficult metre, and one not specially appropriate to our language, but which Shelley handles with dexterous ease.\*

Among the shorter poems written by Shelley at this time may be specially noted the splendid, if technically irregular, sonnet entitled "Ozymandias" and the lyric "To Constantia, Singing." The latter is known to have been addressed to Claire Clairmont, whose voice was of surpassing sweetness. While Shelley cared but slightly for what may be called musician's music, he was keenly susceptible to that thrilling melody, instrumental or vocal, which is the outcome of nature rather than of art. This "Constantia" lyric shows how absolutely music could take possession of his whole being.

\*Throughout the autumn of 1817 Shelley's health deter-



he came to the conclusion that a change to Italy was the only chance whereby his life might be prolonged. I have not space wherein to dilate on his intervening correspondence and interviews with Godwin, his meetings with Leigh Hunt, Keats, Horace Smith, and others. Before quitting the record of the Marlow period, however, brief reference must be made to Shelley's prose writings of this time. Among those of prior date which have not yet been mentioned is the admirable "Essay on Christianity," a composition which every thinking person should read. Succinctly, it may be said to be a reverent recognition of the character, mission, and teaching of Christ, and an impassioned reprobation of dogmatic Christianity. While he loved and revered the Prophet of Nazareth, he pointed out that so-called Christians worship a figment of their own creation, and that even among the least bigoted sectarians Christ, if He were to return to earth to-day, would be vehemently despised and hated, and, where possible, persecuted. Throughout, the author writes with moderation, and with a logical grasp of his subject which render his conclusions practically irrefutable. As Mr. Symonds has well said, "It is certain that, as Christianity passes beyond its mediæval phase, and casts aside the husk of outworn dogmas, it will more and more approximate to Shelley's exposition."

Early in 1817 he published—by the "Hermit of Marlow"—"A Proposal for Putting Reform to the

advocate universal suffrage, but urged the adoption of annual Parliaments ; while, Republican though he was, he pointed out that the abolition of royalty and aristocracy must be gradual. Of less importance is his second Marlow pamphlet, "An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte."

When Shelley left Marlow he must have been sorely missed. He was ever wont to practise as well as preach the Christian ideal. Not only did he give largely of his means to all whom he considered had any public or private claim upon him, and expend much upon the necessitous in his neighbourhood, but he also devoted many hours weekly to visiting the sick and infirm. At all times his heart went out towards the poor. He would even, on occasion, give needy wayfarers articles of his own apparel. One day he returned home shoeless, having met some weary vagrant whose wants he could not alleviate, having no money with him, and to whom he had given his boots, so that the toil of the journey might be mitigated. It was not his habit to carry money about with him, but this was no bar to his ever ready charity. If he met some one whom he desired to help, he would tear out a leaf from a book or a blank page from a letter and write upon it a succinct cash order to be discharged by Mary on presentation. During part of the stay at Marlow there was great distress among the lace-workers who then congregated in the old river-town, and during his visitations to those in dire need Shelley

His irregularity in his hours of eating, his inadequate diet, his prolonged fasts, the fire of his mind for ever consuming his excitable body, his swift and ardent emotions, his over-keen susceptibilities, all combined to increase the frailty of his physical health. It was with little belief in ultimate recovery, and with but a dubious hope in any prolonged postponement of the end, that he made the final arrangements for leaving England.

Shortly before the travellers left, their two children were duly christened at St. Giles'-in-the-Fields with the names of William and Clara Everina. On the same occasion Miss Clairmont had little Alba baptized by the name Allegra (Clara Allegra), the father's name being duly entered in the register as Lord Byron. It had been decided that Claire was to be of their party. The Shelleys had not yet lost faith in Byron, and believed that he would act honourably by the mother of his child if the twain could be brought together once more.

On the 11th of March, 1818, Shelley saw the English cliffs fade slowly from his view. He did not surmise that their familiar aspect would never more attract his homeward-yearning gaze, nor did Mary dream that when she should recross these narrow seas it would be in bitter and lonely sorrow.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE travellers made direct for Milan, through South-eastern France and Switzerland. It had been Shelley's great wish to settle somewhere on the shores of Como, that loveliest of Italian lakes, but to his chagrin he could nowhere find suitable accommodation. Visits were then paid to Pisa and Leghorn, where the Shelleys became intimately acquainted with the Gisbornes. Mrs. Gisborne had led an eventful and romantic life, was a beautiful and cultivated woman, and in every way one to attract her new friends. The summer was spent at the Bagni di Lucca, high up among the Tuscan forests. Shelley, still far from robust, felt himself unable for the excitement of prolonged poetical composition, though more than one great idea for future development began to germinate in his ever active mind. "Rosalind and Helen," however, was finished, not at all to Shelley's regret, as he valued it little. The weeks passed delightfully. In the early mornings and in the starlit evenings the young people would ride through the alleys of chestnut and beech, but while others drowsed in the heats of the day, Shelley would steal out

mountain torrent precipitated itself into a basin. In one of his letters the poet affords a delightful picture of himself in this lovely spot. Beyond the vast screen of chestnut leaves the sun fiercely flared, but underneath were currents of cool air and perpetual freshness from the spray of rushing water; so translucent was the water in the rocky basin, that the sand and stones at its bottom trembled as in the light of noonday. "My custom is to undress and sit on the rocks, reading 'Herodotus,' until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain. . . . The torrent is composed, as it were, of a succession of pools and waterfalls, up which I sometimes amuse myself by climbing when I bathe, and receiving the spray over all my body whilst I clamber up the moist crags with difficulty." Ere the great heat of summer had abated, Shelley, however, had accomplished at least one delightful task. Plato's "Symposium" had been the fountainhead of his inspiration on the subject of Love, and to introduce Mary to this charmed world was his aim. To this affectionate desire we owe his admirable and beautiful, if not very literal, abridged version of the "Symposium."

Before this, Claire Clairmont—against Shelley's advice—had, at Byron's demand, sent Allegra to her father at Venice. As the weeks elapsed, and as strange and painful rumours came to her ears, her anxiety overbore all other

Florence, thence to Padua, and thence by water to Venice, which they reached on the 22nd of August. They were fortunate in at once encountering kind friends in the persons of Mr. Hoppner, the English Consul-General, and his wife, an amiable lady to whose charge Byron had temporarily surrendered Allegra. In the afternoon of the day of their arrival, Shelley went alone to see Byron. The elder poet took his friend's pleadings and remonstrances in good part, though it was clear that Shelley spoke with much restraint, not considering the moment a suitable one for speaking too plainly or requesting overmuch. Allegra's father, though living a life of reckless debauchery, half scornfully agreed that Claire might have her child again if she wished, but dropped a vague hint that if she thus acted she might find herself absolutely and entirely discarded by the father of her child. From this time forth Shelley could no longer esteem or even care for the man whom with justice, he then and always so much admired as a poet. But he believed that Byron's actions to a great extent belied him; that he lived his dissolute and degraded life out of mere weariness and disgust, and that he had in him all the possibilities of a worthier life.

When the long-anticipated and, doubtless, painful

practical outcome of this visit. Byron then temporarily owned a lovely villa, "I Cappuccini," at Este, high up among the Euganean hills, and a few miles away from that Arqua where Petrarch spent his latter days and died. This villa he offered to the Shelleys and their companion, Miss Clairmont; an offer which was willingly accepted. Shelley at once wrote to his wife to join him with the children, and Mary accordingly set forth from the Baths of Lucca with her little ones. When Este was reached, the baby Clara was suffering from dysentery, and in great weakness; the local doctor's services were worse than useless, and it was determined to go to Venice for medical help. Shelley had already gone thither to make arrangements, but he hastened to Padua to meet Mary and the child. At Fusina the military guard would fain have prevented the passportless wayfarers from travelling further without official consent, but Shelley's urgency and the pitiable state of little Clara overcame their scruples. When Venice was reached in the hot September afternoon, Shelley sped away to find the well-known physician, Dr. Aglietti, but about an hour later the little one died in her mother's arms. The blow was all the more cruel, as the parents had hoped the child had passed the worst.

Early in October the Shelleys were again at the villa in hill-set Este. One splendid poetic idea had been in the poet's brain—the conception of a

magnificence of Shelley's greatest production began to haunt his spirit while the winds of the autumnal equinox swayed the pines and chestnuts on the mountain slopes looking seaward over the Trevisian plain. But brain and pen were also busy on poetic work only less noteworthy. The famous poem "Julian and Maddalo" was mainly written in a summer-house adjacent to the villa, whence a spacious and magnificent view southward could be obtained; and late in October was composed the first draft of the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills." The former poem, apart from its great beauty, has permanent literary interest, in that it affords us portraiture of two great poets. Both are idealized, yet each is recognizable—Byron as Count Maddalo, and Shelley as Julian. In parts the poem is obscure, but, as a whole, it is one of Shelley's most memorable productions. It is composed in the heroic metre, but with a familiarity and ease which charm alike the cultivated and the uncultivated ear. It records a "conversation" between Count Maddalo and Julian, as they ride towards sundown along the wave-washed Lido; to obtain a finer view of the setting sun they embark in a gondola, and pass the Isle of San Servola, where there is a great mad-house, whence resounds the heavy tolling of the vesper bell.

"I rode one evening with Count Maddalo

Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow



Abandons ; and no other object breaks  
 The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes  
 Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes  
 A narrow space of level sand thereon,  
 Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.  
 This ride was my delight. I love all waste  
 And solitary places ; where we taste  
 The pleasure of believing what we see  
 Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.

\* \* \* \* \*

From that funereal bark  
 I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark  
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,  
 Its temples and its palaces did seem  
 Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heaven.  
 I was about to speak, when—' We are even  
 Now at the point I meant,' said Maddalo,  
 And bade the gondolieri cease to row.  
 'Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well  
 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell.'  
 I looked, and saw between us and the sun  
 A building on an island, such a one  
 As age to age might add, for uses vile,—  
 A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile ;  
 And on the top an open tower, where hung  
 A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung."

Shelley is concerned, and partly ideal, but in portions of it there is little difficulty in tracing the sources whence the poet's fancy has taken flight. There is great power in the description of the mad-house and the unhappy man whom they go to visit amidst the rain and wind of a wildly tempestuous day.

In "Julian and Maddalo" occur one often-quoted line and one famous passage. "Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!" is now done to death as a quotation, but no use or misuse can deprive of their pathos and significance the lines setting forth how some unhappy men

"Are cradled into poetry by wrong :  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

In the very beautiful "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" (revised and, probably, in part rewritten a few weeks later at Naples) Shelley, for the first time, uses the seven-syllabled trochaic metre, which afterwards became a favourite with him and may fairly be considered as peculiarly suitable to his lyrical genius. A sombre note is struck at the commencement, and again at the close. The ideal island home referred to was more fully dwelt upon later on in the "Epi-psychidion."

Before October had passed away with the drifting leaves it was found advisable for Shelley to seek a warmer clime, and Naples was finally determined upon. Before the departure Allegra was (to Claire's passionate

her child's prospects if she went against the wishes of Allegra's father. A great elation was in Shelley's heart. "Julian and Maddalo" and the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" were productions of which any poet might be proud; but sweet and keen in his ears was the haunting music of the as yet in great part unwritten "Prometheus Unbound." He could not but feel that he was engaged on a poem which would have no rival in modern times, nor fail to realize that at last he was about to give adequate expression to the marvellous music which had long enchanted his spiritual sense. When, however, Naples was reached,<sup>1</sup> a deep melancholy settled upon him. All that he wrote through the remaining weeks of the year was tinged with gloom or poignant sadness. His apprehensions of impending death, his distraught, nervous condition—his disappointments, hopes, and fears, and his recent sorrow—were probably mainly accountable for this. But there seems to have been another cause. Medwin narrates a strange story of a beautiful woman who had long passionately loved the fragile poet, and often crossed his path even after she had learned from Shelley's own lips that his whole heart was bound up in Mary, and that he could love none other: this fair woman died in Naples shortly after the man whom he so loved had reached that southern city. The incident preyed upon Shelley's mind, always painfully susceptible to emotional influences. In his profound despondency he composed, among other mournful lyrics,

Naples," which every lover of his poetry has read again and again with thrilling sympathy. The pathetic music of the fourth stanza is unequalled in subjective poetry :—

“ Yet now despair itself is mild  
Even as the winds and waters are ;  
I could lie down like a tired child,  
And weep away the life of care  
Which I have borne and yet must bear,  
Till death like sleep might steal on me,  
And I might feel in the warm air  
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea  
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.”

The first days of December found the Shelley household settled in a charming residence facing the royal gardens and overlooking the sea. Shelley's delight in his environment, his keen pleasure in his excursions to Baia, to the summit of Vesuvius, and to the silent city of Pompeii, found immediate expression in letters to friends. The series addressed to Peacock are full of delicate observation, love of all that is rarely beautiful, and an eloquence that is unstudied and the outcome of an essentially poetic mind. Pompeii, as was natural, strongly affected his imagination. In the “Ode to Naples,” written many months after his first visit to the ruins of the buried city, he refers thereto :—

“ I stood within the city disinterred ;  
And heard the autumnal leaves, like light footfalls

his despondency decreased, if it did not wholly vanish. With the first days of spring came the desire to fulfil the intention of a few months' residence in Rome; but before leaving the Neapolitan kingdom a journey was made southward to Paestum, amidst its desolate waste. The approach thereto was toilsome, but exceptionally impressive; and Shelley was deeply stirred by the splendour and magnificence of the ruins. The travellers' time was limited, and they could only bring away "as imperfect a conception of these sublime monuments as is the shadow of some half-remembered dream."

On the last day of February (1818) they looked back on the vision of sea and mountain which they had come to love so well, and five days later they entered Rome—where they obtained lodgings on the Corso. By the end of January Shelley had completed the first act of "Prometheus Unbound"—begun a few months earlier, and in great part composed in the villa gardens at Este, among the Euganean hills. Now that he was in Rome, the most magnificent of all the cities in the world, he strove to finish his greatest poem among the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. There has been no finer delineation of this solitary and inexpressibly beautiful locality than that given by the poet himself in one of his letters to Peacock; nor should any one omit to read Shelley's description of the well-loved haunt, amidst whose waste places he mainly wrote the supreme lyrical drama in our literature. By the beginning of April the

addition was completed in Florence, and "Prometheus Unbound" was published some eight or nine months later.

As the season advanced it became advisable—for little William's sake, if for nothing else—to remove to a less debilitating climate. Mary was not well, and was anxious. In the autumn she expected the birth of another baby, and she could not but see that her eldest-born was over-delicate. The 6th of June had been decided upon as the date of their departure for Leghorn, but before this day arrived the child was in a dangerous state of fever. The parents, who idolized their little boy, exhausted themselves in nursing. After sixty hours of absolutely sleepless watching, Shelley saw the beloved little face suddenly pale, and the eyes, which every one had noted as so rare and beautiful a blue, lose their soft light. The calamity almost broke the hearts of father and mother. He for whom they had hoped and dreamt so much was now no more for them than a beloved memory. He was laid beneath the flowers in that lovely Protestant burial-ground at Rome, of which, some months before his bitter loss, Shelley had written to a friend, "it is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tower of Cestius; and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld." Ere long, yet another whom he knew was to be hid away, under the shade of the same pyramid, from the passionate turmoil of his life.

## CHAPTER VII.

AT the Villa Valsovano, near Leghorn, Shelley strove to forget his grief and check his spiritual despondency in the composition of poetry in a direction as yet untried by him. It is to Mary that we owe gratitude for having persuaded her husband that he had underrated his powers as a dramatic poet, and that he should attempt some adequate performance on an impressive theme. Perceiving how his imagination had been affected by the story of Beatrice Cenci, whose supposed portrait in the Palazzo Barberini at Rome had haunted him ever since he had seen it, she suggested that he should attempt a drama on the strange and tragic history of the evil Count Cenci. At that time the real facts thereof were unknown, and what Shelley had to work upon were legends fascinating and terrible, but distorted by romance and added horrors. The theme took entire possession of him; and the sombre, magnificent, repellent, fascinating, and, in modern times, unsurpassed, drama of "The Cenci" was begun and finished at the

cannot be conveyed in brief excerpts — fragments of fragmentary parts. Both works must be earnestly and lovingly read, and the second, at any rate, read again and again.<sup>1</sup>

From Leghorn the Shelleys went to spend the autumn and winter in Florence, but the cold months proved harmful to Shelley. It was not, however, until after the arrival of the new year that a move to Pisa was made.

<sup>1</sup> Nowhere have I encountered a better, while so concise an estimate of the greater work as that in Mr. William Rossetti's "Memoir." This I cannot do better than quote :—

"There is, I suppose, no poem comparable, in the fair sense of that word, to 'Prometheus Unbound.' The immense scale and boundless scope of the conception; the marble majesty and extramundane passions of the personages; the sublimity of ethical aspiration; the radiance of ideal and poetic beauty which saturates every phase of the subject, and almost (as it were) wraps it from sight at times, and transforms it out of sense into spirit; the rolling river of great sound and lyrical rapture; form a combination not to be matched elsewhere, and scarcely to encounter competition. There is another source of greatness in this poem neither to be foolishly lauded nor (still less) undervalued. It is this :—that 'Prometheus Unbound,' however remote the foundation of its subject-matter, and unactual its executive treatment, does in reality express the most modern of conceptions—the utmost reach of speculation of a mind which burst up all crusts of custom and prescription like a volcano, and imaged forth a future wherein man should be indeed the autocrat and renovated renovator of his planet. This it is, I apprehend, which places 'Prometheus' clearly, instead of disputably, at the summit of all latter poetry: the fact that it



One of Shelley's chief delights during his stay in Florence was to walk alone in the Cascine, watching the wind-swayed or drifting leaves "and the rising and falling of the Arno."

This year, wherein the poet's genius attained its loftiest flight, was not to elapse without an ode as supreme in its degree as is "The Cenci" as a dramatic poem, or "Prometheus Unbound" as a lyrical drama. One day, when the autumnal equinox was at its height, Shelley walked rapturously amid the swaying boughs and whirling leaves of the Cascine, watching the tumult of the driving rain-clouds, and hearkening to the triumphant voice of the wind. Autumnal decay and the barrenness of winter may make the world desolate indeed, but beyond lies waiting the spring of another year. It is the ebb and flow, the endless "baffling change," of the great tide of humanity which Shelley sings, as well as the death and advent of drear or regenerative seasons. There is not in our language a lyrical poem more epically grand than this "Ode to the West Wind."

What fire and passion dwell in these lines :—

"If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O, uncontrollable! If even

Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained, and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud—”

what lyrical rapture and prophetic exaltation in this culminating stanza—

“Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:  
What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,  
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?”

The severe weather which prevailed at Florence in the last month of 1819 made Shelley anxious to escape to a climate where his constant suffering would be less, and where his capacities for work would be stimulated. A move was accordingly made to Pisa, and in the latter part of January comfortable lodging was found in the

whose health began to improve steadily. In Pisa and the neighbourhood he spent the greater part of the life that was left to him. In the city itself the poet's household remained till about mid-June. It was a period of much mental worry. Godwin was in worse monetary straits than ever, and treated his son-in-law in a fashion as importunate as undignified; Mary was distraught by paternal complaints, appeals, and denunciations, by her husband's dubious health and melancholic depression, and by the far from welcome continuous presence of Claire Clairmont; while Claire fretted sorely anent Byron's cruel treatment of her, and about her absent Allegra. Their chief pleasure was in intercourse with the Gisbornes. There was for Shelley much need of something to alleviate his troublous state. It was an aggravation of his suffering that both in England and Italy he should be the subject of relentless abuse. A bitter onslaught upon him in *The Quarterly Review*, on the occasion of the review of "The Revolt of Islam," caused him real pain; while the attitude of most of the English with whom he came in contact was to the last degree impertinent and unpleasant. Once he was even grossly attacked. While waiting one day at the Pisan post office he was overheard by a "gentleman," an Englishman in foreign service, inquiring for letters bearing his name. This man was a powerful fellow, so that when with full force he struck Shelley on the chest—calling out as he did so, "What, are you that damned atheist

bore a grudge against him, set afloat a scandalous rumour which it took some time to trace and cause to be publicly refuted.

By June the summer heats had become severe. The Gisbornes had left the neighbourhood for a time, and their house, Casa Ricci, near Leghorn, was placed at the disposal of their friends, who accordingly moved thither for a few weeks. With the advent of August it would be necessary to seek higher land, but until then Casa Ricci was a pleasant abode. Before he left Pisa Shelley wrote his famous and lovely little poem "The Cloud," charged with an impetuosity of music surpassed by no earlier English lyric. It is a shame to dis sever a stanza or two from so perfect a thing, but the space at my command is now limited, and extracts—it is hardly necessary to say—are not for those who already know the poet's work, but are meant to afford an enticing echo of exquisite music to those whose ears have not yet been charmed therewith. Here, then, are the first and last stanzas of

#### THE CLOUD.

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,  
From the seas and the streams ;  
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid

And then again I dissolve it in rain,  
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am the daughter of earth and water,  
And the nursling of the sky ;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;  
I change, but I cannot die.  
For after the rain, when with never a stain  
The pavilion of heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams  
Build up the blue dome of air,  
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

It was very shortly after the adjournment to Casa Ricci that one summer evening, when among the myrtle-hedges the fire-flies were adventuring their wandering fires against the sundown-glow, Shelley and Mary were arrested in their walk by the impassioned song of a skylark. The result was that universally known lyric, of a music altogether wild and matchless, whereby alone, even if he had written nothing else, a poet's name would have been rumoured to "all the days that are to be." It would be superfluous to quote even a single stanza of the "Ode to a Skylark." On the first day of July the poet wrote that charming epistle in verse, the letter to Maria Gisborne, which so well exem-

during the early part of the stay at Pisa, which should be mentioned here, though not published till late in the same year. This is "The Sensitive Plant," said to have been suggested by the numerous flowers which turned the Pisan residence of Mary and himself into a haunt of spring. The same yearning for the ideal beauty which is the mainspring of some of Shelley's finest poems animates this exquisite lyric. It is not, perhaps, well understood of many, but it is ever fervently admired even where the reader, swallow-like, skims but the surface and catches only vague fleeting glimpses of what the shadow-depths withhold.

There is, so far as I remember, no record in biographical literature of three or four years so filled with varied poetic production of the noblest kind as that which any writer upon Shelley has to refer to in the chronicle of the period comprised within 1819-1822. Like his own skylark, he seemed throughout these years to have lived but to give impassioned utterance to "profuse strains of unpremeditated art." That, however, if he sang without stint, he also jealously revised all he wrote is within our knowledge.

The year 1820 was one of national ferment throughout the southern Latin races. In the early months an insurrection broke out in Spain owing to the tyranny under which the people travailed, and the revolutionary cause triumphed at Madrid: in the autumn the Neapolitans rose against the hated and worthless Bourbon dynasty.

events keenly excited Shelley, and as the outcome of his joy, his hopes, and his fears, he bequeathed to us his "Ode to Liberty" and his "Ode to Naples"—splendid and noteworthy poems, which, moreover—as Mr. Addington Symonds has pointed out—added a new lyric form to English literature.

About four miles from Pisa, among the hills, are the Baths of San Giuliano. Thither in August the Shelleys went to escape the heats of the Tuscan plain. On the 12th, a day of extreme heat, while his wife and Miss Clairmont were at Lucca to see the churches and ramparts, Shelley scaled the heights of Monte San Pellegrino, on the summit of which mountain is a shrine revered of pilgrims. He returned on the morrow, delighted, but greatly fatigued. On the three following days Mary saw her husband arduously employed. When his labour was over, he handed to her that strange, fantastic, fanciful "Witch of Atlas," which to so many readers is as incomprehensible as though written in Hebrew. On his mountain excursion the poet had beheld or fashioned forth a vision. In Professor Dowden's eloquent words, he "beheld for a moment, through the veil in which she hides her loveliness, the form of the great and beneficent enchantress—she whose shadow is the beauty of the

Leghorn. There is, at any rate, a literary relationship between them which is clearly perceptible. In it, as in all Shelley's long poems of a non-dramatic character, the animating central idea is that of spiritual beauty : the 'Witch' is kin to Queen Mab and the 'Veiled Maid' of "Alastor." "The Witch of Atlas" is a fascinating intellectual *fantasia*—a production by its very nature meaningless and valueless to some and infinitely charming to others. It is not, however, a great poem in any sense of the word : being not of this mortal world, and being wrought, as it were, of moonbeams and dawn-rays. It is, indeed, like that "subtle veil" which the "Witch" wove for herself:—

"Which when the lady knew, she took her spindle  
And turned three threads of fleecy mist, and three  
Long lines of light such as the dawn may kindle  
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she  
As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle  
In the belated moon, wound skilfully ;  
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove—  
A shadow for the splendour of her love."

Mary, jealous for her husband's long-delayed fame—of whose ultimate and even speedy arrival she had no shadow of doubt—was somewhat disappointed with the poem. She saw that it was not of the stuff to win wide greeting for its author, and she was eager that he should produce that which would make general recognition of



found it difficult indeed to bear up against the gross abuse or contemptuous indifference which his poetry met with at the hands of the critics.

It is only in theory that the poet is able to devote himself, year after year, to the art he loves, if he meet not with the slightest encouragement and sympathy from without. If, like Shelley, he be well aware that his productions are of no common order, the discouragement is tenfold greater. In a letter accompanying "The Witch of Atlas"—on its transmission to Mr. Ollier, the London publisher—the author gives vent to a transient doubt "whether I *shall* write more. I could be content either with the Hell or the Paradise of poetry ; but the torments of its Purgatory vex me, without exciting my powers sufficiently to put an end to the vexation." Though at first perhaps a little disconcerted at Mary's criticism, Shelley knew that he had been but giving his genius a holiday. In the charming dedicatory stanzas to his wife he playfully refers to her as being "critic-bitten," but immediately adds—

"Prithee, for this one time  
Content thee with a visionary rhyme."

Shortly after the composition of "The Witch of Atlas" Shelley wrote his satire, "Œdipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant," in every way a feeble production. It is no longer read save by literary students, nor did it ever deserve even "a day's possession of the town."

In October the household was disturbed by the

companions to Mary, and the latter was genuinely glad when their companion left to fulfil an engagement as governess in the house of a Florentine gentleman. Shelley escorted Claire to her new abode, and continued to write to her friendly and consolatory letters, couched in a strain of ardent friendship. To Claire's faults he was quite alive, but he felt a real affection for her, and probably regarded the infidelity of Byron as all the more reason for *his* loyalty.

When Shelley returned to San Giuliano, he brought with him his cousin and former schoolfellow, Captain Thomas Medwin, of the 24th Light Dragoons. The poet was glad of his cousin's companionship, though it was not long ere he discovered that Medwin was far from being the intellectual compeer of Mary or himself. Medwin's account of Shelley's appearance at this time is interesting—

“It was nearly seven years since we had parted, but I should immediately have recognized him in a crowd. . . . His figure was emaciated and somewhat bent ; his hair, still profuse and curling naturally, was partially interspersed with grey ; but his appearance was youthful, and his countenance, whether grave or animated, strikingly

On the night of the 25th the banks of the river gave way, and the flood swept across San Giuliano. In the Casa Prinni the water rose four feet from the ground. The Shelleys escaped from an upper window in a boat, and with no little difficulty made their way to neighbouring Pisa, where on the Lung' Arno they found commodious lodging, though it was not for some ten days that they recovered the possessions they had perforce had to leave at the Baths.

The ensuing months at Pisa were full of pleasurable experiences for Shelley and his wife. Agreeable and varied company made the time pass wonderfully, and a fresh creative mood came upon the poet. Just at first, however, there were drawbacks, ill-health not being the least potent among them.

Among the earliest acquaintanceships made was that with a certain Francesco Pacchiani, commonly designated "il Professore," from his official position—most inadequately filled—at the University. This clever, but unscrupulous, and rather shunned than courted, ornament of Pisan society sought the Shelleys, and was by them tolerated for a time. He was indirectly of good service, however, to English literature, for had it not been for him it is just possible that we might have had no "Hellas," and probable that we should have had no "Epipsychidion." On the 1st December Pacchiani introduced to his new friends Sgricci, a famous *improvisatore*, and also took the former to call on a lady called Viriani, of whom more

Quixote," and Calderon—"Pacchiani and a Greek prince called, Prince Mavrocordato." This prince was the patriotic Alexander Mavrocordatos (*Mavrocordato* in Italy), ere long to become the most eminent statesman of the Greek Revolution. Of a keenly intellectual bias, Mavrocordatos was as ardent a student as he was a patriot. From the very outset of his acquaintance with the Shelleys a mutual friendship, compact of admiration, sympathy, and liking, arose between the Greek exile and the English poet. In their literary hours Shelley would instruct the prince in the poetry of Milton, or Mavrocordatos would recite the "Agamemnon" in a manner which to Shelley's northern ear seemed anything but charming. An hour or more daily was devoted by Mary to teaching her new friend English, which he acquired with remarkable ease, and he in turn instructed Mrs. Shelley in his country's ancient language, and read with her the two "Œdipi" and the "Antigone." With the advent of spring these literary pleasures came to an end. The spirit of revolution was alive in the south. The Austrians and Russians determined to suppress the Neapolitan uprising, and in the end triumphed and re-set on his throne the treacherous coward who had been King of Naples. Early in March the troops at Turin made a *pronunciamento*, demanding a constitution; and a week or so later Genoa declared herself free. There were wild hopes abroad

would be made by a king of all Italy from the heart of Rome. It was at this time of excitement, hopes, fears, and wild elation, that Prince Mavrocordatos came round to the Casa Aulla one Sunday, "gay as a caged eagle just free," as Mary recorded in her diary, and told his friends great news about Greece. He had been aware for many weeks of the effort which was about to be made, and at last he was able to announce that his country had declared its freedom. On Monday, April 2nd, he called upon the Shelleys "*rayonnant de joie*." With him he brought the famous proclamation of the insurgent prince, Hypsilantes. This prince, better known abroad as Ypsilanti, had collected an army of ten thousand Greeks, and had entered Wallachia. The Morea, Epirus, and Servia were in simultaneous revolt, and a cry of fury and consternation had gone up from Stamboul. Mavrocordatos, of course, was eager to join his countrymen, and his ardour and excitement were shared by the Shelleys, especially by the poet, who at once took up the Greek cause as one of the worthiest struggles of modern times. The poetical result was the lyrical drama entitled "Hellas," the latest work published by Shelley ere death overtook him, although it was finished in the autumn of the same year as witnessed the Greek proclamation of Independence. It was appropriately dedicated to Prince Mavrocordatos, and was preceded by some remarks which show how ardently the writer realised the greatness of his subject. In this

acquaintances who made up society for the Shelleys in Pisa. Their friends Mr. and Mrs. Williams were those with whom they were most intimate. Both were in every way charming people, cultured, refined, full of sympathy for all that was worthy. The fates of Edward Williams and Shelley were to be indissolubly linked in death, and therefore the former must always be remembered. Rather younger than Shelley, he too had been an Etonian, though unacquainted with his elder schoolmate. After a short experience of the navy, he had entered a dragoon regiment in India, married, sold his commission, and gone to reside with his wife and child at the Lake of Geneva. His friend Medwin persuaded him to journey to Pisa, and as his tastes were literary (as genuine as those of Medwin, while he had nothing of the latter's vanity and commonplaceness of mind), it was an extra inducement to know that he would there meet Shelley. The two families at once became intimate and friendly; indeed, Williams' advent was particularly welcome at a time when the boredom of Medwin's company was becoming almost intolerable. It is to the latter, however, that we owe the narrative of Shelley's intimacy with Emilia Viviani.

In the previous autumn "the professor," Pacchiani, had told the Shelleys about a beautiful and unfortunate young lady of noble birth, whom (as the family confessor—for the versatile chemist was also a priest, though he laughed at his calling) he attended. Count Viviani had

jealous of her young rivals, and contrived, under the false pretence of education, to have them immured in the Convent of Santa Anna, a dreary and wretched residence for Emilia and her sister. Emilia, who at the time of the Shelleys' advent to Pisa had been two years in this convent, was described by Pacchiani as a girl of extraordinary beauty of mind and body, and rarely accomplished. Her father, desirous to get her off his hands without the customary dowry, was anxious to have her married to a wealthy gentleman who would accept her beauty as equivalent to hard cash. Shelley had not changed much since the days when his boyish heart suffered anguish at the thought of Mr. Westbrook's awful tyranny in sending one of his girls to school against her will. Here was a more evil case, with an added air of romance. Still, more circumspection was now necessary, and Mary and Claire Clairmont went one day about the end of November in company with Pacchiani, and saw the lovely prisoner. Both were charmed, though Mary found certain minor flaws, invisible to her impressionable husband, when some days later, along with Medwin and Pacchiani, he first met Emilia Viviani. Her rich Italian beauty, essentially classic in type, her enthusiastic nature, lofty aspirations, and impulsive demeanour, entirely fascinated the poet. Shelley and his wife thereafter visited the Contessina Viviani as frequently as practicable; brought her books and flowers,

Beauty which had haunted his imagination from his early boyhood. He loved Mary none the less because Emilia Viviani entered into his deepest life, because the influence of this beautiful and unfortunate lady swept him out of himself as if he were but a leaf on a whirling current. His passion (for by no other name could his emotion be described) was purely of the mind and spirit; nor does it appear that Mary resented the Platonic love which she could not but have perceived had arisen. A year later—disillusion! Emilia turned out to be mortal, even to Shelley's rapturous gaze. She married a Signor Biondi, and led him and his luckless mother "a devil of a life." In that aversion from disenchantment, which is natural to us all, it is almost welcome to know that she did not settle down to the deadly commonplace which environed her after her marriage. Her great beauty waned, and the malarious air of the Maremma put an end ere long to a brief and unfortunate life. But before her marriage Shelley, inspired by his feelings towards her, and by his impassioned idealization, had composed one of his most memorable poems, that extraordinary and absolutely unique production, the "Epipsy-chidion." In the following year he wrote of it to a friend, "I cannot look at [it]; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have



to avoid it—consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." The meaning of "Epipsychidion" may be given as "a poem on the soul." The poem itself is the rhapsody of an ecstatic spirit upon the theme of ideal love. Plainly inspired by, if not actually based upon, Plato's "Symposium" and Dante's "Vita Nuova," it has manifest points of resemblance to both these testaments of love. In "Emilia" the poet recognizes the long-sought-for union of the Uranian and Pandemic Venus; but even in his lyrical rapture he does not give himself wholly to the new influence. If Emilia be the sun of his soul, Mary is to be the moon—under whose alternate empire he will gladly live. There are few wives, however, who would abdicate the throne of the sun for that of the moon, howsoever charming in theory that of the latter might be. The poem is obscure in many of its allusions, allusions probably to mental rather than to actual experiences. Like the "Vita Nuova," it can only be understood of those who know the secret of spiritual passion. But there can be none who fails to appreciate the exquisite beauty of its verse, the vital poetry which animates it from the first line to the last, the intensity of emotion with which it vibrates. Is it to a woman that these passionate words are uttered?—

"Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,  
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman

or what love is this which would fain annihilate individuality, so that spirit in spirit might merge, and in their supreme height of passion be veritably as one—a love, the full expression of which is beyond human utterance?—

“ One hope within two wills, one will beneath  
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,  
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,  
And one annihilation. Woe is me !  
The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce  
Into the height of love's rare Universe,  
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—  
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire ! ”

There is not in the whole range of our poetry anything more beautiful in description than the following lines delineating the *Ægean* island, the ideal abode, where refuge is to be had from all the weariness and pain of life, a “ Far Eden of the purple East,” set where the ocean hath forsworn its treacheries, where for ever “ the halcyons brood around the foamless isles.”

“ It is an isle under Ionian skies,  
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

The blue *Ægean* girds this chosen home,  
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,  
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar ;  
And all the winds wandering along the shore

The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer  
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year),  
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls  
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls  
Illumining, with sound that never fails  
Accompany the noonday nightingales ;  
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs ;  
The light clear element which the isle wears  
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,  
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,  
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep ;  
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,  
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain,  
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.  
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,  
With that deep music is in unison ;  
Which is the soul within the soul—they seem  
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.  
It is an isle 'twixt heaven, air, earth, and sea,  
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity ;  
Bright as that wandering Eden, Lucifer,  
Washed by the soft blue oceans of young air.  
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,  
Pestilence, War, and Earthquake, never light  
Upon its mountain-peaks ; blind vultures, they  
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.  
The wingèd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm  
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm  
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,  
From which its fields and woods ever renew  
Their green and golden immortality.  
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky  
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,  
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight

Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,  
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile  
Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen  
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,  
Filling their bare and void interstices.

It was not long after Shelley's first call upon Emilia Viviani that he valorously set himself to refute Peacock's essay on "The Four Ages of Poetry," the remarks in which against poetry itself had excited Shelley to "a sacred rage." Peacock had published his dissertation in "Ollier's Literary Miscellany," and his antagonist was desirous of a tourney with him in the same magazine, and with as little delay as practicable. So when he had finished his admirable "Defence of Poetry" (which every literary student should read and master) he sent it to Ollier, who, however, was unable to use it owing to the stoppage of the magazine. The manuscript consisted of the first of three parts; the second and third were never written, and the first was restricted to a survey of the history of poetry, and a treatise on its elements and principles. As might be expected, Shelley takes up the loftiest ground. In reading it, we are not only convinced by its arguments and charmed by its literary power, but also realize that we are perusing an account of all that moulded the views of one of the greatest of English poets.

Shelley, though unable to swim a stroke, behaved with his usual courage and self-possession, and Williams found no difficulty in towing him ashore.

When the summer heats came on with May, a move to the Baths of San Giuliano was determined upon, an additional temptation to this choice lying in the fact that there was a chance of Byron's going thither also. Early in May the Shelleys therefore found themselves at the Baths. Their friends, the Williamses, were at a villa at Pugnano, some four miles distant. Here, day after day, the poet, either alone, or with Mary, or often with Williams, would sail in his boat along the waters of the Serchio, or over the river-like canal which meandered between Pugnano and San Giuliano. The quiet and rest of these days were greatly enjoyed by Shelley who had again grown weary and depressed. Life became a dream, when he could lie in his frail craft drifting along the Serchio's current, watching the clouds trailing their shadows over water and hill, or when in the cool of the evening the boat set towards home adown the picturesque *canale*, with the aziola crying softly through the dusk, and the fireflies, one by one, lighting their tiny lamps among the overhanging myrtles. The poetical outcome of one such water excursion with Williams, one lovely July morning, was "The Boat on the Serchio." Every one who knows must love this short poem, as simple in style as it is beautiful in effect. "Melchior" and "Lionel" respectively represent Williams and the poet. As for Mary,

romantic novel, Valperge, or visiting Emma Viviani or Jane Williams.

It was while at the Baths that Shelley wrote a poem which, artistically regarded, is one of his most perfect achievements, and ranks at the same time as one of the finest elegiac poems in any language.

In February he had heard of Keats' severe illness of the lungs, and of his arrival in Italy. He at once wrote to the young poet, and urged him to come to Pisa. In the previous summer, when Keats' complaint first declared itself, Shelley had sent a similar invitation, which the author of "Endymion," however, could not see his way to accept. And now he was far too unwell to be able to act upon his correspondent's kind and courteous suggestion; indeed, the shadow of death was already upon him. Shelley did not hear of Keats' death until some weeks after the event, and when he received the news it was with mourning for the loss of one whom he knew to be a great poet, and who had been even more harshly treated than himself. On his first acquaintance with his younger comrade's early poetry, he had not been greatly impressed, considering that more promise than accomplishment was shown. When, however, he came to read "Hyperion" he not only realized the genius therein displayed, but believed that Keats was destined to a higher place in poetry than he himself could ever hope to occupy. There were certain radical differences between the two poets which prevented full

that the poet must also be first and foremost the artist. It is a fact that though the elder poet recognized in "Hyperion" one of the finest modern poems, he seemed indifferent not only to "Lamia" and "The Pot of Basil," but to Keats' noblest odes. As the seer, as the prophet, as the poet of humanity, Shelley ranks far above Keats; as the heart-whole devotee of beauty for beauty's sake, as the artist before aught else, Keats must be adjudged the superior. Comparisons, however, are generally futile. It is enough for us to know that Shelley is the supreme singer, the divinest lyric voice, in all our realm of literature, and that since Shakespeare no poet has exceeded Keats in fulness of poetic utterance.

Very soon after the sad tidings were made known to him Shelley, enthusiastic for the fame of his dead friend, and indignant at the gross attacks of the reviewers—attacks which he naturally enough, though wrongfully, believed to have been the main cause of the young poet's breakdown—began an elegy upon the death of his unfortunate friend. He chose the Spenserian stanza as most suitable, and indubitably had in his mind the "Laments" of Bion and Moschus, and the "Lycidas" of Milton. In selecting the name "Adonais" as that by which to personate Keats, he probably was influenced by Bion's "Adonis," of which "Adonais" is the more mellifluous Doric form. Curiously enough, this poem on the death of Keats was of all Shelley's productions that which its subject would unhesitatingly have pronounced

sense as adequately as "Adonais"—so rich with the precious ore of poetry unadulterate. On the whole, the latter portion of the poem is the finer. It is more interesting, because it is more directly the expression of Shelley's self, and because it owes less to classic models. Nowhere, however, is it disfigured by inappropriate images. In place of mourning fauns and satyrs there are Splendours and Glims, wild-voiced Echo silent now among her mountain hollows, Morning clad in a strange grief, the Dreams which haunt Adonais dead, Spring sorrowing for her lover who is no more, Urania herself weeping by the bier of her beloved—around which throng the desolate Hours, and, among others, Desires and Adorations, winged Persuasions and Veiled Destinies,

✓✓✓  
✓✓✓  
✓✓✓  
" All he had loved, and moulded into thought,  
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound."

All readers of "Adonais" must be familiar with its loveliest passages, those impassioned verses of consolation, in particular, beginning

" Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep !  
He hath awakened from the dream of life."

Nor can any literary student fail to see in the "In Memoriam" of a later poet the influence of the author



XLIII 1379 "He is a portion of the loveliness

Which once he made more lovely."

There are in "Adonais" no stanzas which touch us more than those representing Shelley himself. After describing how others who had loved or admired the dead poet came to pay reverence he recounts his own advent :—

XXVI - XXXIII  
"Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,  
A phantom among men, companionless  
As the last cloud of an expiring storm  
Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,  
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,  
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray  
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,  
And his own thoughts along that rugged way  
Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey.

A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift—  
A Love in desolation masked—a Power  
Girt round with weakness ; it can scarce uplift  
The weight of the superincumbent hour.  
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,  
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak  
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower  
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek  
The life can burn in blood even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,  
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue ;  
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,  
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew  
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,  
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart

Shook the weak head that it might smite

When Adonais has been received into the mysterious world beyond our ken, the poem grows less exultant and more charged with sorrow and trouble. Finally, in a strange rapture, and in stranger prescience, the poet feels that he also is soon to join those who have gone before :

“ I am borne darkly, fearfully afar ;  
 Whilst burning through the inmost veil of heaven,  
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.”

“ Adonais ” was printed at the Didot press in Pisa, and was sent in type to London, where, however, it was not republished. Seven years after its author's death it was reprinted at Cambridge by a few enthusiastic students, admirers of the little read poets, Keats and Shelley.<sup>1</sup>

It was while engaged upon “ Adonais ” that Shelley was much perturbed by the piratical republication, by a London bookseller, of his boyhood's poem, “ Queen Mab.” He wrote at once to a solicitor, instructing him to procure an injunction, but the man Clark defied all prosecutions, and is said to have sold copies by the thousand. The most gross attacks were in consequence made upon its author in various quarters. The “ Govern-

EV. 492

Early in August Shelley received a letter from Byron urging him to proceed to Ravenna for a meeting. Thither accordingly Shelley went, and spent some time in company with his friend. He found Byron improved in most respects. Though living with the Countess Guiccioli in an illegal union, he no longer permitted himself any of that indulgence in vice which had threatened to ruin him wholly during his residence in Venice.

In the nights the two poets would discuss literary matters, or the elder would read, to his companion's delight and admiration, the unpublished cantos of "Don Juan." In the late afternoons and evenings they would ride through the sombre alleys of the pine-forest. But about the middle of the month Shelley grew tired of Ravenna (which interested him not at all, save as containing the shrine of Dante), and of its unhealthy climate; and wearied also of the trying life at the Palazzo Guiccioli, and of the lacqueys, ten horses, eight huge dogs, three monkeys, five cats, the eagle, the crow, the falcon, the five peacocks, the two guinea-hens, the Egyptian crane, and the Venetian valet who had stabbed two or three people, the strange company which with Lord Byron and his mistress made up the extraordinary household. Before leaving he paid a visit to Byron and Claire Clairmont's daughter, Allegra, at the Convent of Bagnacavallo, and was much taken with the latter's beauty, vivacity, and promise of mental power.

Shelley himself did not lay great stress upon this poem and notwithstanding its great and varied beauty his wisest critics are inclined to endorse his opinion of it to a considerable extent. It is markedly unequal. The original Prologue holds out a promise which is not exactly fulfilled—indeed, Shelley's original conception for his drama would seem to have been on a more epical scale than that which for some reason he allowed to take its place. It is in "Hellas," however, that we have a supreme manifestation of the poet's lyrical genius. The choric chants beginning—

" Worlds on worlds are rolling ever  
From creation to decay ;"

" In the great morning of the world ;"

and—

" The world's great age begins anew,"

mark Shelley's highest reach in what may be termed the epic treatment of lyrical themes.

In the autumn the Shelleys again settled down at Pisa, sharing the Tre Palazzi on the Lung' Arno with the Williamses, and delighting more than ever in the company of these good friends. Williams was a pleasant companion for the poet, and his wife inspired in Shelley a deep and ardent while a purely friendly affection. Byron, also, lived close by, and altogether Shelley an

Shelley's circle of friends than Edward John Trelawny, commonly called Captain Trelawny. He is interesting to us now not only as one of the most entertaining and reliable biographers of Shelley's latter days, but also for his own sake. Eminently a man of action and, in the best sense of the word, a man of the world, Trelawny had sojourned in most parts of the globe, and had studied human nature in all its phases. In person he was singularly striking. That he knew how to write almost as well as he knew how to live, is evident from his interesting semi-autobiographical work "*The Adventures of a Younger Son*," and from his practically immortal "*Records of Byron and Shelley*." There could, perhaps, be no more decisive testimony to the beauty of Shelley's life and nature than the witness of this brilliant, shrewd, often cynical, experienced wayfarer upon the earth. Trelawny was impressed by Shelley at the outset, and came to consider him the purest and finest nature, as well as the most intellectual mind, with which he had ever come in contact. In his fascinating "*Records*," there is nothing more delightful or more memorable than his account of his first encounter with the poet. He had arranged to pass the ensuing winter in hunting, in company with his friends Captains Roberts and Williams, in the Maremma, but wished first to spend some time in Pisa so as to be near Byron and Shelley, the two poets whose writings he so much admired, and

appearance. After a long stop at Genoa, he mentions that, anxious to see the poet, he left his companion and drove to Pisa alone.

“I arrived late, and after putting up my horse at the inn and dining, hastened to the *Tre Palazzi*, on the *Lung’ Arno*, where the Shelleys and Williams’s lived on different flats under the same roof, as is the custom on the Continent. The Williams’s received me in their earnest cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams’s eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway, she laughingly said,

“‘Come in, Shelley, it’s only our friend *Tre* just arrived.’

“Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face that it could be the Poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment: was it possible this mild-looking beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stunted him in his ‘sizings.’ Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? His face brightened, and he answered briskly:

masterly manner in which he analyzed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality I no longer doubted his identity; a dead silence ensued; looking up, I asked,

“ ‘ Where is he ? ’ ”

“ Mrs. Williams said, ‘ Who ? Shelley ? Oh, he comes and goes. like a spirit, no one knows when or where. ’ ”

Both Byron and Shelley were greatly attracted by Trelawny, and a very sincere friendship at once arose between the two latter. The days passed quietly but pleasantly, without even such extraneous excitement as was caused one day before Trelawny's advent, when news came that a man who had committed sacrilege at Lucca had been sentenced to be burned—a sentence which had so horrified Shelley that he had proposed to Byron a scheme for the forcible release of the condemned wretch, which only fell through on receipt of the news that the galleys had been substituted for the stake.

When not in the pine-forest adjacent to Pisa, Shelley spent most of his time with one or other of his friends, in his boat. Trelawny has told us how the days passed for his friend. “ He was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, and Spinoza, with the accom-

spring morning he went with Mrs. Shelley in search of the errant poet. Having traversed the Cascine for some two or three miles, they dismissed their calèche and wandered through the forest. Crossing a sandy plain they proceeded until the noon-heat fatigued Mary, who sat down in a sheltered spot while her companion roamed off to continue the quest. Finally, when the afternoon shadows were beginning to lengthen, Trelawny encountered an old contadino, of whom he made enquiries.

“L’Inglese malincolico haunts the woods maledetta. I will show you his nest.”

“As we advanced, the ground swelled into mounds and hollows. By and by the old fellow pointed with his stick to a hat, books, and loose papers lying about, and then to a deep pool of dark glimmering water, saying, ‘Eccolo!’ I thought he meant that Shelley was in or under the water. The careless, not to say impatient, way in which the Poet bore his burden of life, caused a vague dread amongst his family and friends that he might loose or cast it away at any moment.

“The strong light streamed through the opening of the trees. One of the pines, undermined by the water, had fallen into it. Under its lee; and nearly hidden, sat the Poet, gazing on the dark mirror beneath, so lost in his bardish reverie that he did not hear my approach. There the trees were stunted and bent, and their crowns were shorn like friars by the sea breezes, excepting a cluster of three, under which Shelley’s traps were lying; these overtopped the rest. To avoid startling the Poet out of his dream, I squatted under the lofty trees, and opened his books. One was a volume of



in amazement at the frightful scrawls—"a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks," as he describes it.

It was about this time—some weeks earlier than the pine-forest episode—that the friends talked over the scheme of a yacht to be jointly owned. The suggestion, indeed, was Trelawny's, who little guessed of what ill-omen it was to prove. Shelley was delighted, and might have accepted his friend's practical suggestions as to its build, had he not been overruled by Williams, who was insistent on the adoption of a model made by a naval friend of his. This design was ultimately sent to Trelawny's friend, Captain Roberts, then resident in Genoa, who, after expostulating upon what he considered its untrustworthy features, consented to undertake the superintendence of its building. Before the ill-fated boat left the Genoese dockyard, the Shelleys and Williamses had left Pisa, late in April, for Casa Magni, a house literally on the sea-marge between the village of Lerici and San Terenzo. The house was large though not roomy, and would have been desolate had it not been for the splendid vision of sea, sky, and mountainous background, which was visible from its windows. But for the verandah the visitors would not have taken it. Provisions had to be fetched from a village some three or four miles distant, and the peasants in the neighbourhood were half-savage. Trelawny describes it as more like a bathing-house than a comfortable

accommodation, by remarking that the sea was his only washing-basin. The few weeks that were to ensue before the terrible catastrophe of early July were amongst the happiest in Shelley's life. Seasons as pleasant he had hitherto spent—during the autumn at Great Marlow for instance, when the boating excursion to the 'Thames' source took place; but now he was happier than of yore in that he had reached a mental standpoint whence he could adequately survey his past achievements, and look forward with definite assurance, "if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment," to a future of yet worthier accomplishment.

On the 12th of May, about a fortnight after the settlement at Casa Magni, the small schooner-built craft arrived from Genoa. Though fast, strongly built, and not deficient in beam, she was, as Trelawny remarked, very crank in a breeze: two tons of iron ballast, moreover, were required to bring her down to her bearings. On Byron's initiative, though rather against Shelley's approval, she was christened *Don Juan*. An English lad named Charles Vivian had accompanied the boat, and was retained by Shelley to help him and Williams in its management. Naturally the owners of the *Don Juan*, whose title they ere long changed to *Ariel*, were upon the water morning, noon, and night. The magnetic fascination of the sea held Shelley in thralldom at once welcome and irresistible. As a seaman, he was

steer at the same time, as one was mental, the other mechanical. . . . The boy (Vivian) was quick and handy, and used to boats. Williams was not as deficient as I anticipated, but over-anxious, and wanted practice, which alone makes a man prompt in emergency. Shelley was intent on catching images from the ever-changing sea and sky; he heeded not the boat."

The evenings were generally passed in a manner pleasant to all—conversation, readings from great writers, and music. Sitting on the terrace of Casa Magni, they could see the moonlit waters lip-lapping almost at their feet, and from the woods behind came the soft cry of the aziola, or the dissonant whirr of the night-jar.

As the summer heats advanced one or two incidents occurred, strange at the time, stranger to those who remembered them a little later. One of these was the apparition of Allegra, who, a short time before, had succumbed to the malarious fever which, arising from the marshes of Ravenna, had reached the wretched convent of Bagnacavallo. On the evening of the 6th of May, Shelley and Williams were walking on the terrace of the villa, when the former suddenly grasped his companion's arm, and seemed violently excited as he stared seaward. "There it is again—there!" he exclaimed, pointing across the moonlit surf. The vision he had seen was that of Allegra, who had risen from the sea, clapping her hands and laughing joyously, and beckoning to him.

was aroused by screams proceeding from the sitting-room. Shelley was found rigid with the horror of a vision which had just appalled him. A cloaked figure, he said, had come to his bedside and had beckoned him to follow: when they had reached the sitting-room, the figure had withdrawn the cloak from its features, and in them Shelley beheld his own. "Siete soddisfatto," the apparition said, and vanished. The origin of this vision has been supposed to be a drama of Calderon's, which Shelley is understood to have read while at Casa Magni, wherein a somewhat similar episode occurs.

On the 1st of July, Shelley and Williams left in the *Don Juan* for Leghorn, where the former hoped to meet Leigh Hunt and arrange with him and Byron for the publication of the projected newspaper to be called *The Liberal*.

Before he left Shelley was engaged upon the composition of a poem which, fragmentary as it is, ranks among his loftiest achievements. Had "The Triumph of Life" been finished, it would have ranked only second to "Prometheus Unbound." This was the poem for which he had discarded the drama of "Charles I.," begun at Pisa during the winter. The latter is an exceedingly fine composition so far as it goes, and further demonstrates its author's capacity for dramatic poetry: but we cannot wish it had been completed at

jubilation. The vision is, broadly speaking, the triumphal procession of the powers of life dragging captive the spirit of Man. The mighty dead obey the poet's summons, but from none is there any tidings of good, or sure prophecy of man's redemption. We know not to what triumphant or despairful end the solemn music would have attained had the poet lived. The poem closes abruptly with these words: "Then what is Life? I cried"—a sentence, indeed, of profound significance when we remember—as Mr. Symonds says—"that the questioner was now about to seek its answer in the halls of Death."

When Shelley left for Leghorn, he had to leave Mary behind. Weak and ailing from a recent miscarriage, and perhaps depressed by the various ominous incidents to which I have already referred, she was disturbed by vague alarms and forebodings.

At Leghorn Shelley met the Hunts and went with them to Pisa, where they had anything but a cordial welcome from Byron. As soon as it was practicable, he prepared to return: Mary was anxious about him, and Williams was fretting to be back again.

The painful story has been so often told and is so familiar, that it will be best narrated here with the utmost brevity. On the afternoon of Monday, the 8th of July, Shelley and Williams, with the boy Vivian, set sail from Leghorn. Trelawny, who was then taking charge of Byron's yacht the *Bolivar*, was unable to accompany

the thunder brooded among the jagged clouds which gathered above the horizon. From the top of the lighthouse Captain Roberts uneasily watched the progress of the *Ariel*. On the *Bolívar*, the Genoese mate remarked to Trelawny, "the devil was brewing mischief." Ere long a sea-fog came up, and the boat was shrouded from view: those who were on shore or in harbour were glad that they were not upon the sea, which had become discoloured and moaned with premonition of storm.

Trelawny had gone to his cabin, but about half-past six was awakened by a sudden tumult. The sea was like lead, and was covered with scum: so sluggish was the water that the heavy thunder-drops spurted from its impenetrable surface, and the wind, passing over, failed to ruffle forth an oily wavelet. At last the tempest came, brief in duration, but fiercely violent. In about twenty minutes the seaward expanse was clear again, but on it was no sign of the *Ariel*. Trelawny was uneasy, but believed she had made Via Reggio by the time the storm had burst.

Three days afterwards Trelawny suspected the truth, and communicated his fears to Byron. Meanwhile Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams waited at Casa Magni in an agony of suspense; hope and despair alternating until the latter wholly prevailed. More days of dreadful anxiety passed, and at last news came to Trelawny that

disfigured both that recognition was difficult ; the faces and hands were fleshless, and the bodies pitifully frayed. Three weeks later the skeleton of the boy Vivian was washed ashore, but it was not until September that the *Ariel* was recovered : the schooner was found to have been not capsized, but sunk, in from ten to fifteen fathoms of water, and was injured by a hole in her stern.\* When Shelley's body was found, Trelawny noticed that in one pocket was a volume of Sophocles ; and in the other, a copy of Keats' last volume, doubled back at "The Eve of St. Agnes," as if the poet had been reading there at the moment of the catastrophe.

To Trelawny fell the painful duty of breaking the news to the two waiting wives. It is needless to dwell on their agonized grief, or on the days that followed for them in Pisa, whither their friend had taken them. It had been arranged that Shelley's remains were to be buried at Rome, near his little son William and his friend Keats : Williams's were to be conveyed to England. But first it was advisable that the ceremony

\* There is no necessity to go into details concerning the much-disputed point as to whether the *Ariel's* misadventure was due to other causes than the fury of wind and sea and mismanagement of those on board. It will be sufficient to state here that there can hardly any longer be a doubt that the boat was intentionally run into by a small craft manned by men who thought that the *Ariel* was owned by the rich English "Millionaire."

proceeded in the *Evening* to the spot where Williams had been washed ashore. No one should omit to read Trelawny's vivid and picturesque account of what followed. By the afternoon the funereal pyre had burnt low, and the friends of the dead had departed.

Next morning, the same party set forth in the same way for the place where three white wands in the sand marked Shelley's temporary resting-place. The day was one of extreme beauty, and Trelawny records how he was more than ever impressed by the splendour of the scenery—the sea, now calm and radiant in front, and, behind, the massed Apennines. In addition to the cremating necessities, there were frankincense, wine, salt, and oil, to pour upon the burning ashes. As Trelawny grimly remarks, more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than the poet had consumed during his life. The wine, and the oil and salt, made the flames glisten and quiver. So intense grew the heat from the white-hot iron and the fires which encompassed it, that the atmosphere became tremulous and wavy. Higher and higher the flames arose, now sombre with smoke, now, when with them the sun's light was interfused, glowing with strange gold. The corpse had become of a dark indigo colour, and at last fell open, laying bare the heart—which on a sudden impulse Trelawny snatched forth, burning his hand severely as he did so. Slowly the skeleton became calcined, till almost nothing was left save some few fragments of bones. And still overhead the funereal



fires rose and waved to and fro : around them wheeled a curlew, wildly wailing, and heedless of those who would have driven it away. At last all was over. The ashes of the dead, having been placed in an iron box, were conveyed to Rome. Here they were finally buried in a spot in the Protestant Cemetery, selected and purchased by Trelawny. In the adjoining burial-ground lay the poet's son William, and Keats. Around Shelley's grave Trelawny planted several cypresses and laurels ; among whose branches the thrush now calls at morn, and whence in the evening the song of the nightingale is heard. Behind rises the pyramid of Caius Cestius : on one side is the flowery city of the dead : on the other, immemorial Rome and leagues of desolate Campagna. On the flat gravestone, now environed by violets and pansies, is the following inscription :

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY,  
COR CORDIUM  
Natus iv. Aug. MDCCXCII.  
Obiit viii. Jul. MDCCCXXII.

“Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change,  
Into something rich and strange.”

---

upon his works, his genius, and his rank in and influence upon literature; but for the reasons set forth in the beginning of this monograph, I came to the conclusion that best service could be done by contenting myself with biographical narrative. There is more than enough of criticism—good, bad, and indifferent—upon Shelley's poetry, and further amplification thereof, would, after all, amount to nothing more than the expression of another person's opinion. There is no such individual as a critic whose dicta are invaluable. It is only the sum of the best criticism that is of indubitable value.

So, while what the present writer, or any other Shelleyan critic, might say upon the poetry of Shelley would have little weight with the great mass of his non-critical admirers, there is the sum of all the best criticism of half-a-century to reckon with. What, then, does this declare? More and more assuredly that Shelley is one of the very greatest of English poets, and that as a lyrical poet he is absolutely unrivalled. Posterity will probably rank the "Prometheus Unbound" higher even than we do; as for certain lyrics, would it not be almost an impertinence to attempt to criticise productions which belong to the supreme height of art!

He was a new force in literature, and his influence is probably as incalculable as it is apparently illimitable. On the forefront of the time, he was prophet and seer as well as poet. Hence the immense influence he has

revered not only as a great poet, but as a reformer and spiritual guide.

Again I must emphasize the fact—for without doubt among my readers will be many who have not yet made acquaintance, or are but slightly familiar, with the longer poems of Shelley—that this biography will not fulfil its purpose, if it fail to induce towards study and individual criticism of the poet. It is, in a word, but an introduction to the study of Shelley's life and work. If it serve this end, I am content.

Of Shelley himself a last word may here be added. Not for this set of readers nor for that, but for all who love what is loftiest and best in poetry, Shelley must always seem one of the highest-enthroned among the kings of song. It can never be that the avarice of time shall take his name and his music from us. Even as "Adonais," of whom he wrote in deathless strains, he veritably wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead.

FINIS.

# INDEX.

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## A.

"Address to the Irish People,"  
83 85

"Address to the People on the  
Death of the Princess Char-  
lotte," 135

"Adonais," 172

"Alastor," extracts from, 20; its  
growth, 112; description and  
criticism, 115

"Ariel to Miranda take," 182

## B.

"Boat on the Serchio," extract  
from, 31, 170

Boinville, Mrs., 95

Byron, Lord, intrigue with Claire  
Clairmont, 118; lives in Geneva  
with his physician and friend  
Polidori, becomes acquainted  
with Shelley, friendship between  
the two poets, 119; commences  
the tale, "The Vampire," 121 :

Byron gives the Shelleys and  
Claire Clairmont the use of his  
villa at Este, 140; sees Shelley  
at Ravenna, 176; Byron meets  
Trelawny and Shelley at Pisa,  
178; Byron at Shelley's crema-  
tion, 189, *et seq.*

## C.

Clairmont, Claire (Clara Mary  
Jane), daughter of William  
Godwin's second wife by a  
former marriage, sister by  
courtesy of Mary Godwin, ac-  
companies Mary and Shelley to  
Switzerland and elsewhere, 105;  
leaves them for a time, 109;  
urges them to go to Geneva so  
that she may again meet Byron,  
118; birth of her daughter, 125;  
the child is christened by the  
name of Allegra, and mother  
and child accompany the Shel-

prospects, 143; she leaves the Shelleys' home, and becomes a governess in Florence, 159

Clairmont, Charles, brother to Claire Clairmont, goes an excursion with Mary, Shelley, and Peacock, 110

"Cloud, The," 153

#### D.

"Defence of Poetry," 169

Dowden, Prof., "Life of Shelley," reference to, or extracts from, 14, 35, 36, 70, 81, 93, 126, 156

#### E.

Edwards, Rev. Mr., Shelley's first tutor, 21

Eton, Shelley sent to, 28, 31, 34; 30th July, 1810, he makes his school speech, 36

"Epipsychidion," 165-169

#### G.

Garnett, Mr. Richard, his lines engraved on fireplace of room in which Shelley was born, 15

Gisborne, Mr. and Mrs., 137

Godwin, Mary W., *see* Mary Shelley

Godwin, William, corresponds with Shelley, 80, 82; meets him, 88; irate at his daughter's elopement, 106; disagreement

her parents, 52; her marriage, 53

#### H.

"Hellas," 162, 176

Hitchener, Miss Eliza, corresponds with Shelley, 72, 74; makes his acquaintance, 85; lives with the Shelleys, 87; friendship and residence with them ends, 88

Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, references to his "Shelley at Oxford," 39; writes the romance "Leonora" in conjunction with Shelley, 41; description of, 41; acquaintance with and anecdotes of Shelley; 43-46; the publication of the tractate "Necessity of Atheism," and Hogg's expulsion with Shelley from the University on March 25th, 1811, 48; they go to London together, 50; lends Shelley money, 57; goes with him to see the latter's sisters at their school at Clapham; Hogg hears that Shelley intends to elope with Harriet and counsels marriage, 65; lends Shelley £10, 69; joins the young couple in Edinburgh, 71; his rupture with Shelley, 76; reconciliation with Shelley, 88

Hookham, Mr., publisher of  
"Queen Mab," 93  
Hunt, Leigh, imprisoned, Shelley  
sends a subscription of £20, for  
the benefit of, 90; at his house  
Shelley meets Keats, 125  
"Hubert Cauvin," a romance by  
Shelley, 78  
"Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,"  
extracts from, 32; referred to,  
120

I.

Imlay, Fanny, daughter of Mary  
Wollstonecraft, and step-sister  
of Mary Godwin, 105; she  
poisons herself, 122

J.

"Julian and Maddalo" described,  
141

K.

Keate, Dr., head-master at Eton,  
29, 35  
Keats, John, Shelley's acquaint-  
ance with, 23; first meeting  
with Shelley, 125; Keats and  
Shelley agree each to write a  
long poem, 127; illness and  
death, 171; Shelley's opinion  
of Keats' poems, 171; Shelley's  
elegy "Adonais," upon, 172  
*et seq.*

L.

"Laon and Cythna," *see* "Revolt  
of Islam"

"Letter to Lord Ellenborough,"  
87  
"Letter to Maria Gisborne," 15  
"Letters," Shelley's, 144-145  
Lind, Dr., 32, 33  
"Lines to Mont Blanc," com-  
posed in Switzerland, 120  
"Lines written among the  
Euganean Hills," 141, 143

M.

Medwin, Capt. Thomas, descrip-  
tion of Shelley, 26; collaborate  
in production of "Nightmare"  
with Shelley, 34; claims a share  
in composition of "Wandering  
Jew," 40

Medwin, Mr., lends Shelley £25  
and refuses to lend further sup-  
plies, 69

Munday and Slatter, Messrs.,  
publishers, 40, 47

N.

"Necessity of Atheism, The," 47  
"Nightmare," a romance, 34, 37

O.

"Œdipus Tyrannus: or, Swell-  
foot the Tyrant," 158  
"Ode to a Skylark," 154  
"Ode to Liberty," 156  
"Ode to Naples," 145, 156  
"Ode to the West Wind," 150

Oxford, matriculation at, 36;  
takes up residence at, 38

mont, 110; he suggests name of "Alastor" to Shelley, 115; visited by Mary and Shelley in 1816, 121

Palfold, Mr., Shelley's maternal uncle, assists him monetarily after his expulsion from Oxford, 57; acts as mediator with Mr. Timothy Shelley, 62

Pacchiani, Francesco, "il Professore," 160, 164

"Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things," 59

"Poems by Victor and Cazire," 34, 37, 39

"Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson, The," 37, 41

"Prince Athanase," extracts from, 33, 132

"Prometheus Unbound," 140, 146, 147, 191

"Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote, A," 134

#### Q.

"Queen Mab," 34, 89, 90, 93; description, criticism, extracts therefrom, 112-115; piratical reprint of, 175

#### R.

Radcliffe's, Mrs., Tales, Shelley's delight in, 24

"Refutation of Deism," 1813, 96

to his "Memoir of Shelley," 149

#### S.

"St. Irvyne," 40; copy to Harriet Westbrook, 60

"Sensitive Plant, The," 155

Shelley, Sir Bysshe, grandfather of the poet, 16; his death, 108

Shelley, Charles Bysshe, son of Shelley and Harriet Westbrook, born November, 1815, 102; dies in boyhood, 103

Shelley, Elizabeth, eldest sister of the poet, 18, 20

Shelley, Hellen, sister of the poet, 18-21

Shelley, Ianthe Elizabeth, daughter of Shelley and Harriet Westbrook, born June, 1813, 93

Shelley, John, brother of the poet, 18

Shelley, Lady, 25, 98

Shelley, Mrs. Elizabeth, mother of the poet, 15, 56

Shelley, Mary (Mary Godwin) meets Shelley, 97; description of, 98; views on marriage, 102; goes to the Continent with Shelley, 103; "History of a Six Weeks' Tour," 107; birth and death of her little daughter, 109; Mary and Shelley live at Bishopsgate, Windsor Park,

109 ; birth of a son, William, January 24th, 1816, 117 ; goes with Shelley and Claire to Geneva, and meets Byron, 118 ; composes "Frankenstein," 121 ; returns to England and visits Peacock at Marlow, 121 ; resides at West Marlow, and death of her half-sister, Fanny Imlay, 122 ; marriage with Shelley, December 30, 1816, 123 ; birth of her second child, 131 ; leaves England for Italy, 136 ; daughter dies at Byron's villa at Este, 140 ; death and burial of her son William in Rome, 147 ; at Leghorn she urges Shelley to try dramatic writing, which results in the composition of "The Cenci," 148 ; at Pisa Mary distraught by her father and by Claire Clairmont's fretfulness, 152 ; her disappointment with "The Witch of Atlas," 157 ; her relief at the departure of Claire from the household, 159 ; at San Giuliano they are joined by Captain Thomas Medwin, 159 ; her new novel, "The Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca," 159 ; record of daily reading, 160 ; she teaches English to Prince Mavrocordatos, and he teaches her Greek, 161 ; at San

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, his birth, 15 ; his ancestors, 16, 17 ; his parents' marriage, 18 ; his appearance as a child, 18 ; description of his childhood, 18-21 ; his tutor, Rev. Mr. Edwards, 21 ; school at Sion House, 22 ; Mr. Medwin's description of his personal appearance at this time, 26 ; Shelley goes to Eton, 28 ; his pursuits during recreation hours, 30 ; his friendship with Dr. Lind, 32 ; beginning of his literary life, 34 ; begins "Queen Mab," 34 ; "Poems by Victor and Cazire," 34, 39 ; "Nightmare," 34 ; "Zastrozzi," 34, 36, 38 ; his progress at Eton, 35 ; matriculates at Oxford, 36 ; his friendship with Harriet Grove, 36, 52 ; "St. Irvyne ; or the Rosicrucian," and "The Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson," 37, 40 ; the romance "Leonora," 41 ; enters University College as a Leicester Student, 38 ; introduces himself to the publisher, Mr. Stockdale, 39 ; "The Wandering Jew," 40 ; Thomas Jefferson Hogg becomes his friend, 41 ; Hogg's description of Shelley as a student, 43-46 ; Tractate on the "Necessity of Atheism," 47 ;



of Things," 59; friendship with Harriet Westbrook, 60-65; her family, 61; annuity of £200 from his father, 63; story of Shelley's elopement and marriage, 65-70; residence in Edinburgh, 71; friendship of Miss Hitchener, 74, 86, 87, 88; Miss Eliza Westbrook, 75, 83; rupture with Hogg, 75; resides at Keswick, and makes Southey's acquaintance, 77; Mr. Westbrook allows his daughter £200 a year, 78; the romance "Hubert Cauvin," 78; refusal to sign the entail, 79; the burglary at Keswick, 82; "Address to the Irish People," 83; residence in Dublin, 83; moves to Lynmouth, 86; first poetic impulse, 86; "Letter to Lord Ellenborough," 87; resides at Tannyrallt, Tremadoc, 87; becomes acquainted with William Godwin, 88; philanthropic exertions at Tremadoc, 90; sends £20 to a subscription for Leigh Hunt, 90; burglary at Tannyrallt, 91; removal to Killarney and then to London, 93; birth of his daughter Ianthe, 93; commencement of estrangement with Harriet, 94; acquaintance with the Boinvilles, 95; visits the Lakes, Edinburgh, and makes a secret visit to Field Place, 96; "The Refutation of

Shelley, 97; Shelley meets Mary Godwin, 97; "Stanzas to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, June, 1814," 99; letter from Harriet, continued estrangement, Shelley's interview with her, 100, 101; story of birth of Charles Bysshe, and of Harriet's after-life and death, 102-104; Shelley and Mary Godwin depart for the Continent, 103; accompanied by Claire Clairmont, 105; arrangements for elopement, 106; the journey by Paris to Switzerland, 107; begins "The Assassins," 107; monetary troubles bring him back to England, 107; death of Sir Bysshe Shelley—Shelley's income thereby increased to £1,000 a year, 108; health, 108; birth and death of his and Mary's daughter, 109; Mary and he go to London, Devon, and then Bishopsgate, Windsor Park, 109; Peacock, Charles Clairmont, Mary, and Shelley go an excursion up the Thames and to Oxford, 110; "A Summer-Evening Churchyard, Lechdale, Gloucestershire," 111; "Queen Mab," 112; "Alastor" finished, 112; birth of Mary and Shelley's son William, January 24th, 1816, 117; in March of same year "Alastor and other Poems"

Mary to go to Geneva; there he makes acquaintance with Byron, 118; friendship between the two poets, 119; "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" conceived, also "Lines to Mont Blanc," 120; visited by "Monk" Lewis, 120; Shelley and Mary return to England, 1816, and visit Peacock at Marlow, 121; they settle in West Marlow in 1817, 122; 1816 a memorable year, 122; visits Leigh Hunt, 122; hears that his wife, "Harriet Smith," has drowned herself in the Serpentine, 123; on 30th December, 1816, marries Mary Godwin at St. Mildred's Church, London, 123; reconciliation with Godwin, 123; Lord Eldon decides against Shelley, and gives his two children by Harriet to the custody of their grandfather, Mr. Westbrook — the children placed under the care of Mr. Hume, 124; sympathy of Leigh Hunt, 125; meets Keats, 126; poetic creativeness, 127; Keats and Shelley agree each to write a long poem, 127; both poems commenced in 1817, "Laon and Cythna," 127; "Rosalind and Helen," 131; birth of his and Mary's second

Putting Reform to the Vote," by the "Hermit of Marlow," "An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte," 134; his philanthropic works at Marlow, 135; Shelley and Mary's children christened, and the family leave England for Italy, 136; they settle at Leghorn, and become acquainted with the Gisbornes, 137; Shelley's life there — translates Plato's "Symposium"; accompanies Claire Clairmont to Venice to negotiate with Byron about Allegra, 139; expedition with Byron to the Lido, 139; "Prometheus Unbound," conceived, 140; little Clara, Shelley's daughter, dies at Villa Este 140; "Lines written among the Euganean Hills," and "Julian and Maddalo," 141; goes to Naples, 144; Medwin's story of the hopeless love of a beautiful woman for Shelley, 144; "A Tale of the Coliseum," 144; "Stanzas written in dejection, near Naples," 145; "Ode to Naples," 145; visits Pæstum, settles in Rome, and writes "Prometheus Unbound," 146; death and burial of his son

the "Ode to the West Wind," 150; onslaught on Shelley in *The Quarterly Review*, 152; assault by a gentleman at Pisa, 152; "The Cloud," 153; at Casa Ricci near Leghorn, "Ode to a Skylark" written, 154; "Letter to Maria Gisborne," 154; "The Sensitive Plant," 155; "Ode to Naples" and "Ode to Liberty," 156; the composition of "The Witch of Atlas," 156; disappointment of Mary with the poem, 157; "Œdipus Tyrannus, or Swell-foot the Tyrant," 158; secession of Claire Clairmont from the household, 159; Thomas Medwin becomes an inmate in her place, 159; inundation at San Giuliano, return to Pisa, and acquaintance with Francesco Pacchiani, "il Professore," 160; acquaintanceship with Prince Mavrocordatos, 161; "Hellas," 162; acquaintance with the Williams', 163; acquaintance with the Contessina Viviani commences, 164; the outcome of which is the poem "Epipsychidion," 165; "Defence of Poetry," 169; Shelley upset on the Pisan Canal, 170; visits Baths of San Giuliano, and writes "The Boat

lawny at Pisa, 178; Trelawny's description of Shelley, 179-181; "Ariel to Miranda take" composed, 182; Trelawny, the Williams', and the Shelleys take Casa Magni, near Lerici, 182; acquisition of the yacht *Ariel*, 183; apparition of Allegra, 184; apparition of Shelley's self, 185; Shelley and Williams start on the ill-fated journey to Leghorn, 185; "The Triumph of Life," 185; the story of Shelley's death, 186; his cremation, 189; his burial, 190.

Shelley, Timothy, father of poet, 15; his attitude to Shelley after the latter's expulsion from Oxford, 54; meets Hogg and Shelley at Miller's Hotel, 56; on his son's refusing to separate from Hogg stops monetary supplies, 57; allows his son £200 a year, 63; hears of his son's marriage and stops supplies, 70; renewal of allowance of £200 a year, 80; allows Shelley on Sir Bysshe's death £1000 a year, 108

"Sonnet to Ianthe" extract from 94  
 Southey, Robert, meets Shelley at Keswick and is friendly, 77, 78

"Stanzas 1814," 97

"Stanzas written in dejection

"Swellfoot the Tyrant," 158  
Symonds, Mr. J. A., quoted 134,  
156, 186

## T.

"Tale of the Coliseum, A," 144  
"To Constantia, Singing," 133  
Trelawny, Edward John, Captain,  
becomes acquainted with Shelley  
at Pisa, 178; references to him  
or to his "Records," 182, 183,  
187, 189  
"Triumph of Life The," 185, 186

## V.

Viviani, Contessina Emilia, ac-  
quaintance with Shelley, 164;  
is the inspirer of "Epipsychi-  
dion," 165

## W.

"Wandering Jew," a poem, 34,  
40  
Westbrook, Eliza, 61; goes to  
live with the Shelleys, 75  
Westbrook, Harriet; school-friend  
of Shelley's sisters, sends him  
money, 54; becomes acquainted  
with her, 60; her family, 60;

friendship with Shelley, 61;  
elopement and marriage, 65;  
the young wife, 72-89; Harriet's  
studies, 89; birth of her daugh-  
ter Ianthe, 93; estrangement  
with Shelley, 94; re-married  
24th March, 1814, 97; she, with  
her sister and baby leave Shelley,  
97; efforts at reconciliation, 100;  
interviews with Shelley, 101;  
birth of her son Charles Bysshe,  
and subsequent story of her  
life and death, 102-104

Westbrook, Mr., father of Harriet  
Westbrook, 60; allows her £200  
a year, 78; gains custody of  
Shelley's and Harriet's children,  
124

Williams, Mr. and Mrs., friend-  
ship with, 163; Mr. Williams  
starts with Shelley for Leghorn,  
185; is drowned, 187

"Witch of Atlas," 157

## Z.

"Zastrozzi" romance, 34; school  
lanquet on proceeds of, 36;  
Miss Harriet Grove's possible  
share in composition of, 36;  
account of, 38